

Beauty and The Beast



STUDIES IN LITERATURE 19

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Beauty and The Beast

Christina Rossetti,
Walter Pater, R.L. Stevenson
and their Contemporaries

Edited by
Peter Liebregts and Wim Tigges



**Amsterdam - Atlanta, GA
1996**

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INTRODUCTION: BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

WIM TIGGES

The year 1894 was in many ways the prime year of the British *fin-de-siècle*. It was commemorated at the Eighth Leiden October Conference of 1994 first of all as the year of death of three writers: Walter Pater, Christina Rossetti, and Robert Louis Stevenson. At first sight, these authors seem to have little else in common. Pater, of course, is generally acclaimed as the founder of the Aesthetic Movement in Britain, with the publication in 1873 of his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. His only novel, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), addresses that Victorian dilemma "how to live". Rossetti's association with the short-lived but very influential Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and its periodical *The Germ* (1850) marks her as a co-founder of that earlier aesthetic movement. Moreover, her religious poetry reflects the melancholy mysticism which is held to be typical of the second half of the nineteenth century and which persisted into the *fin-de-siècle*; in recent years a connection has been made between the spiritual side of her poetry and the erotic. Stevenson's most famous work, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), may perhaps be seen as the epitome of the *fin-de-siècle* tension between good and evil, beauty and beast. Both individually and between the three of them, Pater, Rossetti and Stevenson appeared to offer an interesting opportunity to investigate the distinctive ambivalences in the literature of the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The conference theme, therefore, became that of "Beauty and the Beast?", centring around the three authors and the year 1894.

Of course, 1894 also saw the appearance of many noteworthy works of literature, art and music, works whose varied nature in one way or another demonstrates the characteristics of the period: in fairly random order I would mention George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, featuring the mesmeric if not demonic Svengali; George Gissing's *In the Year of Jubilee*, contrasting the seemingly immortal Queen Victoria with the vulnerable needlewomen of late-Victorian London; Thomas Hardy's *Life's Little Ironies*, as well as the serialized version of *Jude the Obscure*,

with its beautifully beastly contrast between Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead; Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* with its *Doppelgänger*-motif; Rudyard Kipling's first *Jungle Book*; Arthur Machen's horror story "The Great God Pan"; George Moore's *Esther Waters*, probably the most English novel of that very Irish gentleman of letters; William Morris's *The Wood Beyond the World*, produced at his own Kelmscott Press as a modern artefact emulating medieval book-production; that unjustly neglected Anglo-Irish novel, *The Real Charlotte*, a magnificent as well as amusing character sketch of a nasty woman and beastly beauty, by two women-writers, Edith Somerville and "Martin Ross". In drama, resurrected in this period, we have Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, and William Butler Yeats's second play, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, which testifies, like Morris's fantasy, to the contrast between the fairy world of eternal youth and the old and sordid reality of the here and now.

1894 was also the year in which G.S. Street and Robert Hichens published their witty spoofs on Oscar Wilde's decadent novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Street's *Autobiography of a Boy* and Hichens' *The Green Carnation* each took off their target when Wilde, the English translation of whose play *Salomé* was prepared in the same year by Lord Alfred Douglas, was at the height of his fame, and, of course, on the eve of his tragic fall. It was the year which saw the first issue of the most famous (or notorious) periodical of the period, *The Yellow Book*. In 1894, Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* was first performed, as were Massenet's opera *Thaïs* and Dvorak's *New World Symphony*, and Gustav Mahler completed his Second Symphony.

In 1894 Sarah Grand coined the phrase "New Woman", testifying to the late-Victorian emancipation of woman, of which the contemporary male undoubtedly acknowledged the beastly as well as the beautiful side. In this year, which falls exactly between those of two literally most revealing inventions of the late nineteenth century, namely the strip-tease and the X-ray, writers, musicians, artists and social observers all over Europe revealed the ecstatic beauties as well as the beastly depths of what was at once the "belle époque" and the "naughty nineties", when aestheticists vied with naturalists and symbolists with decadents. It is precisely these polyvalent attitudes to the arts (and to life), as well as the tension between them that it is the intention of this volume to explore.

As critics and literary historians are increasingly making evident, the last decades of the nineteenth century, far from being an unmemorable period of transition between Victorianism and Modernism, demonstrate a flourishing of significant social as well as cultural movements and -isms: socialism and feminism, jingoism and utopianism, imperialism and

anarchism, transcendentalism and fatalism, pessimism and vitalism, Aestheticism, Decadentism, Naturalism, Impressionism and Symbolism. It was a period which witnessed a revitalisation in the fields of music, drama, art and literature. It was an era of national awakening, as exemplified by the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Celtic Twilight (which is the twilight of dawn at least as much as of sunset). It was also an era of great international cultural cross-fertilization. No wonder there was ample room for tensions and polarities: the vitalism of Bergson and Nietzsche vied with the realism of Ibsen and the morbidity of Strindberg, the essentially collectivist Naturalism of Zola and Hauptmann with the individualist aestheticism of Couperus and Wilde. Populist movements were set off by esoteric ones, action by contemplation, science by magic, belief in evolution by submission to fate, adoration of youth and physical beauty by flirtation with decay, decadence and death, nostalgic pastoralism by “modern” urbanity. All of these contrastive aspects and many more are thematically reflected in the culture of the period, and many of them feature in the contributions to this book.

Needless to say, a two-day conference or a single volume of its proceedings can never aspire to do full justice to the three authors who take pride of place, or to the variety of themes and subjects mentioned above. All the same, the editors pride themselves on presenting a representative and coherent collection of papers by scholars of various disciplines and affiliation. Bringing together Walter Pater, Christina Rossetti and R.L. Stevenson in a single context inevitably already meant to introduce a basis for beautiful as well as beastly contrast. Individual papers, moreover, explore the ambivalences within the work of each author discussed. We are made aware first of all of the balance in Rossetti’s poetry, whether a “lady-like poise” or the “dark spider within”, a “beastly self” hidden behind a devotional façade, or a sister’s feminine identity masked by her brothers’ well-intentioned revising hands and editorial endeavours — the plurality of a “woman’s voice” in any case.

Likewise, we are made to discover more about Pater’s “gay discourse”, masked by the façades of classical studies and self-censorship, as well as about the versatility of his critical techniques. Stevenson’s division between dreams and reality, prefiguring the post-modern theme of the Double, is explored in some detail, as are the implicit fears of the empire of barbarism and the dark underside of late nineteenth-century society striking back in *Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and the covered references to sexuality in Stevenson and Chekhov.

Other papers investigate George Moore’s wavering between Aestheticism and Naturalism, between style and story; Wilde’s view of

art as essentially subversive, “the beginning of the end”; elegance masking brutality in Arthur Schnitzler’s plays set in beautiful but decadent Vienna; and the contrast between “beautiful” and “beastly” protagonists in the early works of the Dutch novelist Louis Couperus. The international setting of the European *fin-de-siècle* is reflected in discussions of French, German, Russian, Italian, Irish and Dutch “connections”. Whichever of these late nineteenth-century double-binds are recognizable, *mutatis mutandis* or not, in our own twentieth-century *fin-de-siècle*, is left for the reader of this volume to decide.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI IN AND OUT OF GRACE

C.C. BARFOOT

The simplest and most direct introduction to the elementary facts about the Rossetti family is to be found in the opening sentences of William Michael Rossetti's "Memoir" in the first collected edition of *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti* in 1904:

Gabriele Rossetti and his wife Frances Mary Lavinia (Polidori), marrying in April 1826, had four children. They were: Maria Francesca, born 17 February 1827; Gabriel Charles Dante (better known as Dante Gabriel), 12 May 1828; William Michael, 25 September 1829; and Christina Georgina, 5 December 1830. These were all born at No. 38 Charlotte Street, Portland Place, London.¹

To expand this slightly: the Rossetti children, two girls and two boys, were born in successive years, starting in the year after their parents' marriage, to a wholly Italian father and a half-Italian, half-English mother. The two boys were sandwiched between the two girls. Maria, the eldest child, became an anglican nun, and died in 1876; Dante Gabriel became a famous artist and poet, and was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 (he died in 1882 of what today might be called drug abuse); and William Michael lived until 1919 to become the chronicler of his family and their circle. Christina Rossetti, the youngest child, became a great poet (a greater poet than her famous elder brother), and died on 29 December 1894, just three weeks after her sixty-fourth birthday.

It is useful to start off with this bare recital of a few essential biographical facts, since one of the embarrassments of studying the work of Christina Rossetti is that in so doing one becomes inevitably involved in the minutiae of her life, his life, their lives. All this is undoubtedly

1. *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti, London, 1904, xlvi.

interesting, but, with respect to all the biographers (including the most recent, Jan Marsh), one wishes it were not the case. There seem to be far more students of the lives of the Rossettis — as a family, as individuals (naturally especially of the lives of Dante Gabriel and Christina) — than of their works; or their works are used, in the case of Dante Gabriel literally, to illustrate their lives; or their lives are drawn upon endlessly (especially in the case of Christina) to interpret their works. Of course, William Michael, the other brother, is as much to blame as anybody for this state of affairs. It is to be regretted that there are not more readers for Christina Rossetti's poetry — all of her poetry and not just for those poems which are felt to supply the essential clues and keys to the biography. In the case of Christina Rossetti, almost above all comparably great poets, the intriguing known and unknown facts about her life — the two famous refusals of marriage (again highlighted by William Michael in his "Memoir"), the possibility of the existence of a third lover (now generally discounted), the physical and/or psychological origins of her ill-health, etc. etc. — get in the way of a serious and thorough reading of her poetry. It would be better if we knew nothing about her at all, and only had her works. We could even exist happily without any of the portraits and sketches of her (mainly by her brother), beautiful and fascinating as these are.

Many people know at least one poem of Christina Rossetti's, the carol "In the Bleak Mid-Winter", without knowing who the author is. Most new readers of Christina Rossetti are first struck by a particular strain in her poetry — the pure, lyrical, cool poems of intense emotional distress, such as the following:

I nursed it in my bosom while it lived,
 I hid it in my heart when it was dead;
In joy I sat alone, even so I grieved
 Alone and nothing said.

I shut the door to face the naked truth,
 I stood alone — I faced the truth alone,
Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth
 Till first and last were shown.

I took the perfect balances and weighed;
 No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise;
Weighed, found it wanting: not a word I said,
 But silent made my choice.

None know the choice I made; I make it still.

 None know the choice I made and broke my heart,
 Breaking mine idol: I have braced my will
 Once, chosen for once my part.

I broke it at a blow, I laid it cold,

 Crushed in my deep heart where it used to live.
My heart dies inch by inch; the time grows old,
 Grows old in which I grieve.

This is the first part of “Memory” (dated 8 November 1857 — just a month before Christina Rossetti’s 27th birthday).² Naturally one is moved by such a poem, by what it appears to be saying, particularly coming from such a young woman (“My heart dies inch by inch; the time grows old,/ Grows old in which I grieve”), and by the firm, deliberate style and tone in which it speaks out. One runs the risk of sounding both sexist and ageist to suggest that a notable characteristic of Christina Rossetti’s poetry, frequently commented on, is that it betrays a range of bitter experience, and a weight of years, quite beyond her actual age and her real encounters with the world.

This is not only true of the poetry she wrote in her twenties, but even more so in the case of the poetry of her teenage years. She clearly has an amazing emotional imagination. What is more astonishing is that she speaks without any of the sentimental flamboyance that you might expect of a young poet thought of as living beyond his or her emotional means. Perhaps it is this element of coolness and control, and not just the meaning of the words themselves, that conveys a sense of poetry written by a much older person. Keats, an equally impressive young poet writing about the pains and tribulations of existence, resorts to a far richer palette of images and verbal music in order to impress his woes upon his readers (and we love him for it), but such soul-music (if we may use such a phrase) is also the mark of a young poet. At the time of his premature death he too was seeking for a more austere and chaste style typified in the new opening that he wrote for his revision of “Hyperion”, “The Fall of Hyperion”. Christina Rossetti found such a pure style apparently almost without effort, possibly from the same source that it is supposed Keats found his, Dante (a feat of imitation or emulation that Christina’s

2. *Ibid.*, 334; *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R.W. Crump, 3 vols, Baton Rouge and London, 1979-90, I, 147-48 (from which all quotations are taken). The second part of “Memory” was written some 7½ years later on 17 February 1865.

brother, named after the great Tuscan poet, seems to have found beyond him).

Christina Rossetti says that she “shut the door to face the naked truth”, and in so doing she seems to have found an almost naked style. Such a poem as this is characteristic in its avoidance of striking metaphors. Indeed the images are quite conventional, so conventional they hardly strike one as figurative expressions at all — “I nursed it in my bosom”, “I took the perfect balances and weighed”, “Breaking mine idol”, “Crushed in my deep heart”, “My heart dies inch by inch”. These particular metaphors are made to sound like the literal truth, so “Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth” they are. This is it exactly. “Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth”, or self-display, or emotional indulgence, or sentimental flamboyance of any kind, we believe implicitly in the authenticity of the feelings and the experience. We unhesitatingly respond to the ache of the memories of this twenty-six-year old woman, as though she were an ancient sibyl speaking of the age-old woes of the weary world. We hardly dare or care to stop to ask ourselves whether this young women has lived long enough to experience such elemental calamities, which, in fact, we would be hard put to it to explain quite what their origin is, such is the sense of generalized universal grief borne by a single poised individual that we derive from this poem.

“Poise”, of course, is the key: “I took the perfect balances and weighed;/ No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise” Few poets in English have such perfect balance, such calm deliberate poise as Christina Rossetti. The lines themselves seem to exhibit impeccable equilibrium on the point of the balance:

I nursed it in my bosom / while it lived
 I hid it in my heart / when it was dead;
 In joy I sat alone, / even so I grieved
 Alone / and nothing said.

I shut the door / to face the naked truth,
 I stood alone /— I faced the truth alone,
 Stripped bare of self-regard / or forms or ruth
 Till first and last / were shown.

I took the perfect balances / and weighed;
 No shaking of my hand / disturbed the poise;
 Weighed, found it wanting: / not a word I said,
 But silent / made my choice.

None know the choice I made; / I make it still.

None know the choice I made / and broke my heart,
Breaking mine idol: / I have braced my will
Once, / chosen for once my part.

I broke it at a blow, / I laid it cold,

Crushed in my deep heart / where it used to live.
My heart dies inch by inch; / the time grows old,
Grows old / in which I grieve.

Since the metaphors are restrained and conventional, the only disturbance to the steady composure of the rhythm comes from the repetitions: “I stood alone — I faced the truth alone”, “None know the choice I made; I make it still./ None know the choice I made and broke my heart”, “the time grows old,/ Grows old in which I grieve”. And these verbal repetitions are supported, naturally, by the rhyme (a simple monosyllabic rhyme), and by the light alliteration: “weighed — wanting — word”, “broke — breaking — braced — broke — blow”, “cold — Crushed”. There is comparable amount of assonance (apart from the rhymes and the repetitions of phrases and words), sometimes involving internal rhymes, or internal/external rhymes: “naked/bare/shaking”, “blow/grows/old”.

A colleague recently demonstrated at a reading of Christina Rossetti’s work that one could omit every other line of a longish poem of hers (“Dream Love”) and still have a poem that makes sense. Indeed by so doing, two poems emerge for the price of one. Rather disconcertingly, something similar can be done with “Memory” by reading it in rhyming couplets instead of in its actual ABAB rhyme scheme:

I nursed it in my bosom while it lived,
In joy I sat alone, even so I grieved,
I hid it in my heart when it was dead;
Alone and nothing said.

I shut the door to face the naked truth,
Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth
I stood alone — I faced the truth alone,
Till first and last were shown.

I took the perfect balances and weighed;
Weighed, found it wanting: not a word I said,
No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise;
But silent made my choice.

None know the choice I made; I make it still.
 Breaking mine idol: I have braced my will,
 None know the choice I made and broke my heart,
 Once, chosen for once my part.

I broke it at a blow, I laid it cold,
 My heart dies inch by inch; the time grows old,
 Crushed in my deep heart where it used to live.
 Grows old in which I grieve.

To a certain extent, this is a cheap parlour-trick. What does it demonstrate? That Christina Rossetti's poems do not make sense? Or that the sense they do make is a very slender one, deliberately constricted, even artificially and narrowly constructed? If for some reason or another you happen not to be moved by Christina Rossetti's poetry, or refuse to be moved by it, or simply find it hard to respond to it (or if you even rejoice in not being able to respond to it), this could be used as a lever to establish that she is not a very good poet. Her poise could be described as "ladylike", the balance of a tight, tidy, baleful, depressed Victorian spinster, restricted to an unchallenging domestic and a self-indulgent artistic circle.³ You could respond in this way, but it would be unwise, and untrue to the experience of many of her readers not otherwise given to succumbing to melancholy charm. This phenomenon of a poem in which the lines can be discretely rearranged (not necessarily without loss, it should be said) does not, I think, indicate the lame

3. It is W.W. Robson in his essay on "Pre-Raphaelite Poetry" in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature 6: From Dickens to Hardy*, ed. Boris Ford, Penguin, 1958, 367, who seems to feel that there is some critical significance in calling Christina Rossetti "a lady", which "will be understood to have no implication of snobbery". In fact he is using the term in a paragraph in which he is welcoming in her style the "absence of anything like the sonorous and vatic manner, at one and the same time declamatory and embarrassingly intimate, which we associate with Mrs Browning". Nevertheless it is significant that when he came to republish this essay in his *Critical Essays*, London, 1966, this comparison is broadened to include Dame Edith Sitwell along with Mrs Browning as its target, while the "unsnobbish" reference to Christina Rossetti as a lady is dropped. Indeed in his Preface to the *Critical Essays* he declares that this essay, now entitled "Three Victorian Poets", is the only one to be "substantially revised", and it is clear from the additions and omissions in the essay itself, that although he still feels called upon to pronounce that "Christina Rossetti is not a major poet" (214), this, as one of the minor additions to his original essay, seems to represent an attempt to convince himself that his original critical stance can be maintained. His readers, impressed by his frequent expression of admiration, are less likely to be persuaded.

restrictions of such a poem as this, but that very balance, that very poise we initially detected. It is evident that the poem only moves forward in a very limited sense. The repetitions already tell us that, under severe pressure, the poem moves round on itself in its contemplation of the damaged, dying heart of the speaker (or singer). The poem does not move forward in any kind of argumentative way. The poem has poise, but it is the positioning of the poet above her own nagging predicament, its painful angles and edges prodding her, that compels her to seek and force that balance.

However, one soon learns that Christina Rossetti's poetry has far more variety than one is at first inclined to give her and it credit for. Just to give a limited example, in the same month, November 1857, that she wrote the first part of "Memory", she also wrote "A Birthday":

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.⁴

This poem (dated 18 November 1857) was written just nine days after "Memory I", which suggests that either Christina Rossetti had a very volatile temperament (which is possible), or that she had a very erratic and impulsive imagination (which is more likely), capable of projecting her into and out of a diverse range of emotional situations. Five days later she composed an unhappy bucolic ballad, "An Apple Gathering":

4. *The Poetical Works*, 335; *The Complete Poems*, I, 36-37.

I plucked pink blossoms from mine apple tree
 And wore them all that evening in my hair:
 Then in due season when I went to see
 I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass
 As I had come I went the self-same track:
 My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass
 So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Lilias smiled in trudging by,
 Their heaped-up basket teased me like a jeer;
 Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,
 Their mother's home was near.

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
 A stronger hand than hers helped it along;
 A voice talked with her through the shadows cool
 More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
 Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
 I counted rosiest apples on the earth
 Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
 Laughing and listening in this very lane:
 To think that by this way we used to walk
 We shall not walk again!

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
 And groups; the latest said the night grew chill,
 And hastened: but I loitered, while the dews
 Fell fast I loitered still.⁵

And on the same day (23 November 1857), if William Michael Rossetti's dates are to be trusted, she wrote "Winter: My Secret":

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I:
 Perhaps some day, who knows?
 But not to-day; it froze, and blows, and snows,
 And you're too curious: fie!
 You want to hear it? well:
 Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

5. *The Poetical Works*, 335-36; *The Complete Poems*, I, 43-44.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:
Suppose there is no secret after all,
But only just my fun.
Today's a nipping day, a biting day;
In which one wants a shawl,
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps:
I cannot ope to every one who taps,
And let the draughts come whistling thro' my hall;
Come bounding and surrounding me,
Come buffeting, astounding me,
Nipping and clipping thro' my wraps and all.
I wear my mask for warmth: who ever shows
His nose to Russian snows
To be pecked at by every wind that blows?
You would not peck? I thank you for good will,
Believe, but leave that truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time: yet I don't trust
March with its speck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers
One frost may wither thro' the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,
When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud,
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.⁶

Christina Rossetti's poetry has a reputation for its beauty, for its purity, for its morbidity, for its suppressions and repressions — all qualities of refinement and poise, won by her in her wrestling with the beast, real or imagined, spiritual or physical, tempting her, taunting her, threatening her from without or within. She has been regarded, although not perhaps in more recent years, as one of the many spectral women haunting the artistic circles of the period; and in turn haunted and threatened by their predatory sexual advances. Her reputation was probably not much helped by her brother's devoted, and undoubtedly useful, pious edition: too many have been put off by its emphatic

6. *The Poetical Works*, 336; *The Complete Poems*, I, 47.

ecclesiastical arrangement of her poetry and its highlighting of its devotional character — strange coming from the deeply agnostic brother.

Inevitably with the increasing interest in Christina Rossetti in recent years under the influence of feminist criticism, reevaluations of her work have tended to stress other less churchy aspects of her creative achievement. Unfortunately, you could say that to some degree much of this recent work has tended to move interest away from the poetry to the problem of Christina Rossetti and to Christina Rossetti's problems, or to Christina Rossetti as an exemplar of the predicament of all female poets. Christina Rossetti has often become a case study in which "Goblin Market" is taken as the key to all of her sexual, spiritual hangups.

Perhaps the text of "Winter: My Secret" (entitled by the poet in her manuscript, "Nonsense") should be hung up in large modern print over desks of all biographers of Christina Rossetti and all critics and scholars tempted to fall into the biographical fallacy. As we have seen, in the month of November 1857 in four poems (two written on the same day) we observe four different aspects of Christina Rossetti and her poetry. As we study the poetic output of individual months, earlier and later, we find many other different facets revealed, although we have no difficulty in approaching them as the work of a single author. W.W. Robson tries to account, in a very unsatisfactory manner, for the "deprived, depressed, monotonous quality of her writing".⁷ But he need not have bothered, because although some of her poetry is depressed, and may express certain deprivations, it is not in the slightest degree monotonous — nor is all her poetry deprived or depressed.

What current criticism has tended to emphasize is the degree to which Christina Rossetti was conscious of the roles she was forced to adopt, and at the same time the role she was willing to play. To some degree her illnesses which began to develop from her mid-teens, played a part both in her coerced and in her willingly embraced role-playing. What critics could have learned just from reading her poetry, all her poetry, was the propensity of her imagination to assume roles and to don masks. There are two contradictory lines of thought that arise from this: the first is that all women writers are bound to be sincere, since everything that they write is so implicated in their "situation" (the converse of this is that when women writers write flamboyantly about what they cannot or should not possibly know, they are doomed to look pretentious and ridiculous). Consequently, since Christina Rossetti is so evidently writing from within her domestic or sexual or emotional environment, all first

7. *Critical Essays*, 215.

person pronouns in her poetry must in one way or another be subsumed within her existential dilemma. The other line, persuasively argued by some critics, is that since all women are only visible as reified objects, with stereotyped capacities and functions that are taken for granted, a woman writer has no choice but to assume roles. In the case of Christina Rossetti it has been argued that one of the roles she assumes is that of a posthumous woman, all of whose experience is inescapably in the past. She rehearses and plays the part of a corpse with nothing but memory — a sober specimen of the living dead, forever renouncing and forever saying goodbye.⁸

Inevitably Christina Rossetti's early novella, *Maude*, written sometime between 1848 and 1850, but not published until 1897 (three years after her death) is offered as a prize example of the self-consciousness she developed very early. The eponymous heroine of this youthful work is compelled to suffer a fateful accident, probably at about the age of its author when she wrote it (then between 18 and 20), but there is no doubt (indeed the death of Maude confirms the fact) that Maude, a precocious young poet, who "had always an undercurrent of thought intent upon herself",⁹ is a very deliberate self-portrait of Christina Rossetti:

She [Maude] also knew that people thought her clever, and that her little copies of verses were handed about and admired. Touching these same verses, it was the amazement of everyone what could make her poetry so broken-hearted as was mostly the case. Some pronounced that she wrote very foolishly about things she could not possibly understand; some wondered if she really had any secret source of uneasiness; while some simply set her down as affected. Perhaps there was a degree of truth in all these opinions.¹⁰

Such observations as this indicate the amused and amusing self-perception (and self-assurance) that helped to make Christina Rossetti, with all her doubts and emotional plunges, a great poet. It is clear that she enjoyed exploiting the contours of her imagination, nor was she its dupe — although, ironically enough, she made *Maude* the victim of a totally undramatic offstage road accident, as though she enjoyed the prospect of

8. See Dolores Rosenblum, *Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Endurance*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Ill., 1986, *passim*; and Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*, New York and London, 1992, ch. 4.

9. Christina Rossetti, *Selected Poems*, ed. C.H. Sisson, Manchester, 1984, 139.

10. *Ibid.*, 137.

killing off and displaying in her coffin that other self who watched over her shoulder (whose works were buried with her or unceremoniously burned). Many commentators have overlooked the calculated mischievous provocation in Christina Rossetti's writing, even when it appears solemn and glum. The abiding impression when reading through *The Poetical Works* is that the last thing Christina Rossetti really would have wanted was the resolution to her "predicament" either with death or with paradise, since then truly she would have had nothing to write about, no repertoire of guises to explore and exploit, no roles to rehearse and perform with aplomb for the benefit and the bewilderment of her readers. Had she, like Keats, died at "an absurdly early age",¹¹ she would not then have been able to continue to play the part of the performer who, like Maude, refuses to perform; who expresses herself as being "sick of display, and poetry, and acting"; and who deliberately "acquire[s] the reputation of an invalid ... so [her] privacy is respected".¹²

In and out of grace: it seems to me that a hundred years after death, in an age considerably more sceptical than hers ever was — a *fin-de-siècle* regarded by most present-day commentators as being infinitely more cynical than the 1890s — we are in a better position to appreciate Christina Rossetti's poetry than the generations before us. Yet one must admit that Virginia Woolf preparing to celebrate the other centenary (of her birth) in 1930, in her personal address to the poet was not altogether blind:

Death, oblivion, and rest lap round your songs with their dark wave. And then, incongruously, a sound of scurrying and laughter is heard. There is the patter of animals' feet and the odd guttural notes of rooks and the snufflings of obtuse furry animals grunting and nosing. For you were not a pure saint by any means. You pulled legs; you tweaked noses. You were at war with all humbug and pretence. Modest as you were, still you were drastic, sure of your gift, convinced of your vision. A firm hand pruned your

11. For some reason only known to themselves, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *the Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven and London, 1979, say that "Keats died at an absurdly early age" (553: italics added). I am not sure who is supposed to find it so absurd, nor why.

12. *Selected Poems*, 150, 145 and 148.

lines; a sharp ear tested their music. Nothing soft, otiose, irrelevant cumbered your pages. In a word, you were an artist.¹³

There lingers an air of patronage in Virginia Woolf's appreciation; as there does in most of the earlier commentary on Christina Rossetti. But it does usefully urge us back to that poem that tweaks the nose of the reader, even if it does not attempt, at least not overtly, to pull his or her leg, "Winter: My Secret":

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I:
 Perhaps some day, who knows?
 But not to-day; it froze, and blows, and snows,
 And you're too curious: fie!
 You want to hear it? well:
 Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:
 Suppose there is no secret after all,
 But only just my fun

The point being, of course, that Christina Rossetti (if it is Christina Rossetti speaking here), may or may not have a secret, which she may or may not tell us, eventually. But in any case we are intended to remain tantalized, continuing to read avidly for clues, trying to catch her in or out, doggedly pursuing her, and, like paparazzi, hoping to snap her in a revealing moment. But she will not play our game. We must play hers, forced to admire her improvised sounding creative freedom, its pleasure in rhymes internal and external, her elastic metres and pliant rhythms, which she alone, affronted by the whistling draughts that

Come bounding and surrounding me,
 Come buffeting, astounding me,
 Nipping and clipping thro' my wraps and all ...,

but "wear[ing her] mask for warmth", and protected by many layers — "a shawl,/ A veil, a cloak, and other wraps" — can master and manipulate.

In his "Memoir" to his 1904 edition of *The Poetical Works*, Christina's brother speaks of his sister's "spirit of self-postponement" (lxvii), which is better phrase, a better notion, than the idea of repression

13. Virginia Woolf, "I am Christina Rossetti", in *Collected Essays*, London, 1967, IV, 59.

that is so often used about her. In one obvious sense, as we can see in the expressiveness of her poetry, she is not repressed at all, either by self or by anyone else, but she does give an impression that she is always waiting in the wings, abiding her time. As she says in one of her other poems from 1857 (27 August), "The Heart Knoweth Its Own Bitterness", "I must bear to wait/ A fountain sealed thro' heat and cold"; elsewhere she admonishes herself with "Be stilled, my passionate heart".¹⁴ It would be, and has been, easy to read this as repression, but rather, it appears to me, to be an intentional holding back, a premeditated masking or veiling, indeed a calculated "self-postponement". As anyone who has read *The Poetical Works* through knows, no biblical quotation appears more often in her work, in one form or another, than "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12). But it is as though Hope is understood to be the final actor who will ever take his place on the stage, and for whom everyone is waiting impatiently and excitedly to make his long-delayed, infinitely postponed appearance. In the meantime, what is there to be done but to assume as many parts as possible oneself, at least in the imagination, in the poetry that performs, perfectly, aptly, disarmingly, with poise? Christina Rossetti, in or out of grace, and in no way dependent on our grace, is our master/mistress, to whom we may succumb as humourless victims or with whom we may collude, while we are waiting for the performance to reach its apocalyptic climax, in a willing conspiracy of poetry and silence.

14. *The Poetical Works*, 192 and 196; *The Complete Poems*, III, 266 and II, 270.

THE SPIDER'S SHADOW: CHRISTINA ROSSETTI AND THE DARK DOUBLE WITHIN

JAN MARSH

“The gas was alight in my little room with its paperless bare wall”, wrote Christina Rossetti of a night she spent in an austere guest room at the All Saints Hospital in Eastbourne :

On that wall appeared a spider, himself dark and defined, his shadow no less dark and scarcely if at all less defined.

They jerked, zigzagged, advanced, retreated, he and his shadow posturing in ungainly, indissoluble harmony. He seemed exasperated, fascinated, desperately endeavouring and utterly helpless.

What could it all mean ? One meaning and one only suggested itself. That spider saw, without recognizing, his black double, and was mad to disengage himself from the horrible pursuing inalienable presence.

I stood watching him awhile. (Presumably when I turned off the gas he composed himself.)

To me that self-haunted spider appears as a figure of each obstinate impenitent sinner, who, having outlived enjoyment, remains isolated irretrievably with his own horrible loathsome self¹

The starting point for this paper was consideration of the position of Christina Rossetti in terms of her literary-historical relation to writers commonly identified as “Aesthetic” or “Decadent”. Rossetti, who is known mainly as a poet of piety and pathos, sadness and saintliness, is not generally associated with either Aestheticism or Decadence, nor ever identified as an “art for art’s sake” author. Indeed, she was expressly opposed to the Aesthetic and Decadent projects of the 1880s and ’90s. “What would be the use of my attempting to criticise what I should like to expunge?” she wrote of some as yet unidentified poem on what she

1. Christina Rossetti, *Time Flies*, London, 1885, 121-22.

called a “simply [and to her literally] diabolical” subject, which sounds as if it may have been inspired by one of Swinburne’s “pagan” poems or even one of Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal* such as “Les Litanies de Satan”. “I wish it had never been written”, she continued; “this failing, I wish it may never be published”.²

But though the work of both Swinburne and Baudelaire is at an opposite pole from that of Rossetti, there is a perceivable affinity. Swinburne not only esteemed Rossetti’s work highly, he also honoured her in poetic terms as “the Jael who led our hosts [=the Preraphaelites] to victory”³ — a remark glossed by Tom Paulin to mean that she had (metaphorically) driven a nail through the temples of Tennyson in an act of literary parricide that opened the field to the next generation.⁴ Swinburne’s image of Jael is characteristically gory and at first sight assorts ill with the image of Rossetti as a timid self-effacing poet. But he was not the only one to apprehend the affinity. Rossetti’s second collection *The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems* appeared in summer 1866 (delayed like her first volume by Gabriel’s procrastination over the illustrations). A few weeks later came Swinburne’s notorious *Poems and Ballads*, the volume that was vilified and withdrawn and then re-issued with a defence by William Rossetti that explicitly linked his sister with Swinburne by asserting — as was indeed true — that the lyrical cadences of “Madonna Mia” were derived from Rossetti’s “An End”, and making several other comparable correspondences.

The intention was of course to exonerate Swinburne, or at least plead in his mitigation, but the comparison had the rather unfortunate effect of contaminating Rossetti with Swinburne’s sensuousness, as if he had caught what John Morley in the *Saturday Review* called his “putrescent imagination” from something in her verse.⁵ At the same time Henry Morley in the *Examiner* also defended Swinburne in terms similar to those deployed by William Rossetti, identifying the essential message of “Dolores” with that of *Goblin Market*, and saying that Swinburne “sings

2. Christina Rossetti to Lucy Madox Brown Rossetti, n.d., unpublished. As all the letters quoted in this paper are so far unpublished, it is not always possible to give precise place references. All these letters will be included in the edition of Christina Rossetti’s complete correspondence which is being published by the University Press of Virginia, edited by Antony H. Harrison.

3. Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, London, 1917, 137.

4. Tom Paulin, *Minotaur. Poetry and the Nation State*, London and Boston, 1992, 81.

5. *Saturday Review*, 4 August 1866, 145.

of Lust as Sin ... he paints its fruits as Sodom apples, very fair without, ashes and dust within" in a manner that sounds as if it might indeed have been learnt from Rossetti.⁶

Well, perhaps — though it is difficult to reconcile Swinburne's confessed amorality and anti-Christian stance with anything in Rossetti's highly moral and confessedly Christian writing. But in terms of technique, there are similarities. Both writers, for example, are undeniably Aesthetic in the musicality of their versification. In its use of melodic cadence, falling rhythms, repetition, echo, variations on a theme and the occasional discord, Rossetti's verse frequently — in poems such as "An End" (1849) or "Confluentes" (published 1875) for example — aspires to the condition of music in a manner that approaches Pater's famous definition in "The School of Giorgione". Moreover, Pater's equally famous statement that art "comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake",⁷ is foreshadowed by Rossetti's remark, ten years earlier, that her work was founded on just such moments, being "the record of sensation, fancy, and what not, much as these came and went".⁸

In such respects she can thus be seen, seriously if somewhat improbably, as an Aesthetic forerunner, quite possibly an influence. I sometimes wonder whether a passage in her short story "The Lost Titian",⁹ where she created a fictional Venetian painter whose "manners were so good that his delinquencies were overlooked", merely anticipates Whistler and Wilde, or whether it also inspired them?

[H]is sketches sold with unprecedented readiness, his epigrams charmed the noblest dinner-givers, his verses and piquant little airs won him admission into the most exclusive circles if he now committed follies, they were committed in the best society; if he sinned, it was at any rate in a patrician *casa*; and though his morals might not yet be flawless, his taste was unimpeachable.¹⁰

6. *Examiner*, 22 September 1866, 597; and 6 October 1866, 629.

7. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, "Conclusion", London, 1873, 213.

8. CGR to Adolf Heimann, 29 April 1862.

9. Published in *The Crayon*, New York, June-July 1856; and in *Commonplace and Other Short Stories*, London, 1870.

10. Christina Rossetti, *Commonplace and Other Short Stories*, London, 1870, 156.

As well as musicality, morbidity also links Rossetti's work with that of the *fin-de-siècle*, speaking in terms of aesthetic sensibility rather than strict chronology. In her lifetime and beyond she was often criticised for the morbidity of her themes and though generally this criticism came from readers who simply preferred cheerful verse, in 1891 Arthur Symons — author of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) and identified by the *Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1987 edn., 549) as "a leading spirit in the Decadent movement, a defender of Art for Art's sake" — wrote an introduction to Rossetti's work, after paying her a visit.¹¹ Published the following year in the retrospective series *The Poetry and Poets of the Century*, this was short but perceptive. Amongst other things it drew attention to the many poems dealing with the supernatural, especially those like "The Hour and the Ghost", "Jessie Cameron" and "The Ghost's Petition" — "strange little poems, with their sombre and fantastic colouring — the picturesque outcome of deep and curious pondering on things unseen". And Symons went on: "Miss Rossetti's genius is essentially sombre; or it writes itself at least on a dark background of gloom. The thought of death has a constant fascination for her, almost such a fascination as it had for Leopardi or Baudelaire".¹²

He then discussed this assertion, describing Leopardi's fascination with death as that of attraction (and we may note with interest that Leopardi was one of the authors on whom Rossetti wrote for the *Universal Dictionary of Biography* in the late 1850s) and Baudelaire's as that of repulsion. By contrast, Rossetti's fascination with death was a "sad but scarcely unquiet interest in what the dead are doing underground, in their memories — if memory they have — of the world they have left; a singular, whimsical sympathy with the poor dead, like that expressed in two famous lines of the 'Fleurs du Mal'" (*ibid.*).¹³

Certainly Rossetti's fascination with death incorporates a powerful strain of the macabre, which helps account for the fascination her work exerted on both Symons and Swinburne. Often, her work fixes upon posthumous states, with grisly detail, as in "Two Thoughts of Death":

Her heart that loved me once is rottenness
Now and corruption ...

11. See CGR to George Craik, 4 June 1891, British Library Add MS 61896.

12. Arthur Symons, *Poems and Poets of the Century*, ed. A.H. Miles, London, 1892, VII, 423.

13. If anyone can identify the lines meant here, I would be grateful.

The earth must lie with such a cruel stress
On her eyes where the white lids used to press;
 Foul worms fill up her mouth so sweet and red;
 Foul worms are underneath her graceful head;
Yet these, being born of her from nothingness,
These worms are certainly flesh of her flesh¹⁴

More commonly, it dwells on the sensation of being oneself dead and in the grave, buried, under the earth but as if still sentient, in a manner comparable to Baudelaire's "Sepulture"; or on ghosts revisiting the living, as in his "Revenant". There can of course be no direct connection between Rossetti and Baudelaire because it is not possible for him to have seen her work (or likely that he would have been at all interested in it) before publishing the first edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1857, and unlikely that she saw his book before the early 1860s, by which time the majority of her poems in this mode were already written. (Although both her brothers and Swinburne were mightily impressed by Baudelaire, I suspect it was actually the second edition of 1862 that excited them.) Indeed, it may well be that the promotion of Baudelaire's blasphemy and perversion by his admirers in Britain was one reason why Rossetti placed a sort of moral shutter on her Gothic imagination in the years after 1870, except in specifically religious writing, lest her macabre flights of fancy prove inspirational to writers with a less firm grip on good and evil. She was very conscious of literary influence and consequent responsibility, and very fearful of inadvertently encouraging the sort of "diabolical" writing she so wished to expunge.

What links all these writers is of course their Gothic inheritance from the literature of Europe and America. In Rossetti's work this thread, which forms a strong core to the cable of her verse, comes from and contributes to a long tradition, with many strands, from the eighteenth-century English "graveyard school" with its meditations on mortality such as Gray's famous *Elegy*, and beyond that from the fascination with death and corruption developed by both Puritanism and the Counter-Reformation out of late-medieval necrology and so strikingly present in Jacobean drama. It developed forward by way of the Gothic novelists Ann Radcliffe (on whom Rossetti once started to write a biographical and critical study), "Monk" Lewis and Charles Robert Maturin — all of whom were avidly read by Rossetti and her brothers in their youth —

14. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations from CGR's poems are from *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R.W. Crump, 3 vols, Baton Rouge and London. 1979-90.

and by way of the supernatural tales of Coleridge, and most immediately by way of Thomas Beddoes' *Death's Jest Book*, and the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Several of these influences were also shared by Baudelaire (and, incidentally, by Oscar Wilde, who adopted the name "Sebastian Melmoth" from Maturin's hero when travelling in France at the very end of his life).

To these writers, who shaped the shadow side of Rossetti's poetic imagination, can be added the influence of German writers whom the Rossettis studied in their youth with Adolf Heimann, and in particular Gottfried Bürger's "Lenore", in which the dead husband returns to take his bride off to the grave. This ballad was immensely popular throughout Europe and despite its relative antiquity was, alongside Goethe's *Faust*, well-nigh inescapable in Britain in the 1840s, both in translation and in the original, as Queen Victoria's marriage made the German language a fashionable accomplishment. Gabriel Rossetti, for example, made a creditable stab at rendering it into English in shortened form around 1846, so it was well known in the Rossetti household.

To this list of influential reading matter must be added the traditional tales of Europe that remained in the Rossettis' favour well into their teenage years — "all our old favourites", said Gabriel once — partly through Thomas Keightley's *Fairy Mythology* (1838), a compilation of folktales from Europe, partly through Perrault and partly through the Brothers Grimm. These tales included Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Beauty and the Beast and Bluebeard, an especial favourite.

These tales pervade Rossetti's work. She herself described "The Prince's Progress" as a "reverse of the Sleeping Beauty",¹⁵ and later planned to compose a modern collection of these tales to complement her "original nursery rhymes" in *Sing-Song*. This project never came to fruition, though I think the story "Vanna's Twins" is a modern version of the Babes in the Wood, while the account of Maggie in *Speaking Likenesses* seems to owe something to Red Riding Hood. *Goblin Market* has obvious antecedents in the European folklore of encounters with dwarves, trolls, pixies and the like, and can be also seen in part as a variation on Beauty and the Beast, where through the physical contact of taste — itself not unlike kissing — alluring and attractive figures with mouth-watering fruits are transformed into ugly, destructive, bestial beings.

15. CGR to Dora Greenwell, 1866.

The lover as beast, or ghoul, or demon is a recurrent figure in Rossetti's work. As well as in the ghost poems, he appears in "A Nightmare" and in the early sonnet written to *bouts-rimés*, in which a monster with a clammy fin seeks to caress and be caressed by the poet as she lies asleep (or at least lies in her bed). In "A Nightmare" an unidentified interlocutor asks the narrator how she knows that her lover belongs to this realm of the undead, and the narrator replies:

Me by night doth mouldy darkness cover,
It makes me quake to think:
All night long I feel his presence hover
Thro' the darkness black as ink.

Without a voice he tells me
The wordless secrets of death's deep:
If I sleep his trumpet voice compels me
To start forth in my sleep;
If I wake he rides me like a nightmare:
I feel my hair stand up, my body creep:
Without light I see a blasting sight there,
See a secret I must keep.¹⁶

The unseen incubus in "A Nightmare" is a shape-shifter like the revenant or demon lover. In "Jessie Cameron" he is the grandson of "a witch,/ A black witch from beyond the Nile". In one shape or another, this is a stock figure in the European imagination, who usually preys on young girls and is presumably also related to the vampire. It is a figure that especially haunts the Romantic imagination, and may indeed be the

16. In MS this poem is called simply "A Nightmare", but all except the first and last quatrains were lost when torn from CGR's notebook. Written in 1857, the piece was copied out anew around 1863, with some alterations — "friend" for "love" in line 1 and "hunts" for "rides" towards the end — for circulation in the Portfolio Society, a sort of writing circle organized by Barbara Bodichon and attended by Jean Ingelow and others, with the additional title "A Coast", which would seem to refer to the monthly theme set by the Society. It was CGR's custom to "look up something apposite" from amongst her existing compositions for the Portfolio; and with other such MSS collected by Bodichon's relative by marriage Mrs William Smith her text eventually found its way to Princeton University Library; see my Notes on the Portfolio Society lodged with the Archivist of Girton College, Cambridge. CGR never published the poem, but years later she resurrected the central lines, as a verse in *Time Flies* (1885) under the title "A Castle Builder's World", as a haunting image of the vanity of secular desires. Was this perhaps when the lines were cut from the notebook?

creature of Romanticism, though it also features in British balladry. It is no coincidence that the Gothic novel that spoke most powerfully to Rossetti in her adolescence was Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, with its eponymous demon lover whose soul is in hock to the devil and who can only be redeemed by the sacrificial love of a pure woman.

In the Christian tradition this demonic figure — the prince of darkness who hunts the virginal princess — is more likely to appear as satanic, mephistophelean, the personification of evil struggling for possession of the soul, exteriorized into a semi-human creature making tempting offers of desire fulfilled — all desires fulfilled, lawful or not. In what can be termed the post-Christian imagination, it is most often figured as the beast within — or what would become the suppressed self, haunted by the forbidden desires of the Freudian subconscious, that surface in dreams and fantasies. This provides a link with Robert Louis Stevenson, through *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the classic text on this theme for the late, pre-Freudian period. It is an obvious link with Rossetti, through early poems like "The World", in which the pleasant face of the (worldly) self has a dark shadow like a succubus, or late poems like "Babylon the Great", which draws on apocalyptic imagery — or like the account of the spider on the gaslit wall, a "horrible loathsome self" who comes out at night, horned and clawed, a beast, a monster, a demon, essentially hairy albeit female, who represents the suppressed evil, the dark double within. That Rossetti saw this as the beast within is made clear in her anecdote where the spider and his shadow are interpreted as the soul struggling to escape from its own shackled sin. And comparable images, of being yoked to some monstrous burden, pervade her verse, as in "Who Shall Deliver Me?":

Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My lowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.

It would not take much to re-position Rossetti as a poet of fear and haunting rather than pathos and piety. But I do not simply want to restore, or rather insert her into a nineteenth-century European tradition of Gothic terror and the aesthetic of the repressed Freudian unconscious where hairy beasts from spiders to Hydes — all ultimately derived from medieval representations of the devil — roam the world of sleep and break out into displaced consciousness through fiction, poetry, cinema. My conviction is that this Gothic thread is not merely one aspect of her writing, to be set alongside her poignant lyrics, her piety, her love poems, her nursery rhymes, her prayers, her theological writings. I think

this dark side *is* Christina Rossetti, both in literary terms and in devotional terms: her final book was of course a long meditation on the Apocalypse, that most Gothic of biblical texts. As well as being the most powerful element in her work, it is the mainspring, the fountain, the innermost self of her creative imagination, the source of her art. Despite her assertions and pious endings, she is not really a poet of Christian faith and affirmation (which is why her endings can seem so weak, so dutiful). She is truly a poet of horror and despair, death and putrefaction, which perhaps accounts for the perceived affinity between herself and unlikely bedfellows such as Swinburne, Baudelaire, Symons.

Paradoxically, the power of her work stems from her faith: unlike other Decadent writers, she believed in and truly feared the power of internalized Evil, with a capital E. She believed in hell and in the devil as a force within the self, as her poems show and as she wrote in the *Face of the Deep*, her commentary on the Apocalypse:

There is a mystery of evil which I suppose no man during his tenure of mortal life will ever fathom. I pursuing my own evil from point to point find that it leads me not outward amid a host of foes laid against me but inward within myself; it is not mine enemy that doeth me this dishonour, neither is it mine adversary that magnifieth himself against me: it is I, it is not another, not primarily any other; it is I who undo, defile, deface myself. True I am summoned to wrestle on my own scale against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places. But none of these can crush me unless I simultaneously undermine my own citadel ... my own inherent evil is what I have to cope with.¹⁷

It is irrelevant that Rossetti led an exemplary moral life. What is being addressed here is something more profound: the philosophical problem, the mystery of evil in humankind, to which we are locked in an indissoluble embrace that is like the spider's struggle with his shadow, not one to be solved with a fairytale kiss.

Rossetti pondered such matters more than most writers, and also had experience of those states of mind that are the obverse of the mystic's exaltation or transfiguration — the true depths of spiritual despair, *de profundis* — as expressed, for example, in the central section of "An Old-World Thicket", besides which Baudelaire's ennui and spleen seem merely posy, while the intimations of inner horror evoked by other writers look like bogeys to frighten children and evade the issue. In a

17. Christina Rossetti, *Face of the Deep*, London, 1892, 489-90.

true sense her whole oeuvre can be seen as a struggle to overcome and transform the beastly self into a princely soul, striving to attain the Platonic Ideal of Christian goodness and beauty that is represented by the idea of Grace, unattainable in this world and utterly unattainable if you believe only in this world. Thus, her work is also perversely linked to the essential despair of Decadence, which makes her a true bedfellow of such writers. At the same time, as a moralist, she implicitly rebuked the Decadent project in *The Face of the Deep*, urging artists thus:

Strip sin bare from voluptuousness of music, fascination of gesture, entrancement of the stage, rapture of poetry, glamour of eloquence, seduction of imaginative emotion Study sin, when study it we must, not as a relishing pastime, but as an embittering deterrent.¹⁸

Christina Rossetti has suffered greatly in critical esteem by being labelled (as she was proud to be) a religious writer in a now largely discredited — that is to say unbeliever-in — mode. We need to recover her into the mainstream of Romantic writing, within a European tradition that places despair, spiritual anguish, alienation and self-disgust as central elements in the shaping of modern sensibility.

18. *Ibid.*, 399.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S ITALIAN POEMS

VALERIA TINKLER-VILLANI

Very little has been written about Christina Rossetti's Italian poems.¹ Yet the literature and language of Italy meant so much to the Rossettis that Christina's Italian poems certainly merit attention: what specific tools, what particular possibilities, what special voice did Italian offer her? The Italian poems I am concerned with are those included in a separate section in William Michael's 1904 edition of *The Poetical Works of Christina Rossetti*. Somewhat more distant from the direct use of Italian are the translations Christina Rossetti made of her own *Sing-Song* into Italian. Most distant of all are some poems in English with Italy as a theme. It is perhaps best to move towards the central focus of this article — the Italian poems — from the outside, by considering first, by way of context, Rossetti's poems about Italy and, very briefly, her translations of *Sing-Song*.

Three poems were written by Christina in the summer of 1865, partly concerned with her visit to Italy: "En Route" ("June 1865"), "Enrica, 1865" ("1 July 1865"), and "Italia, Io Ti Saluto!" ("Towards July 1865").² All three articulate a position of the self with respect to

1. The poems receive some attention in biographies; for example, Kathleen Jones, *Learning Not to Be First: The Life of Christina Rossetti*, Adlestrop, 1991, 134-35, provides information as to the occasion of their writing; the one critic to devote some critical attention to the poems is Dolores Rosenblum in *Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Endurance*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Ill., 1986, 50-52.

2. For the text of the poems, except where indicated, I rely on *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R.W. Crump, 3 vols, Baton Rouge and London, 1979-1990; but in more general terms my analysis is based on William Michael Rossetti's *The Poetical Works of Christina Rossetti*, London, 1904, rpt. 1924, because I am interested in the way the poems have been brought for a long time to the attention of readers, and William Michael's arrangement is useful in itself. In actual fact, Crumps's volume includes poems in Italian I will not discuss. The three English poems I quote here are on pages 377-79 of William Michael's edition. All translations of the Italian poems are my own.

countries and place (North versus South) by means of a contrast. Addressing Italy, the speaker says “Wherefore art thou strange, and not my mother?”, setting out the opposition very starkly. In the same poem, the self defines itself in terms of singleness and isolation. Similarly, when faced by the presence of Enrica in the eponymous poem, the features of the “Englishwomen, trim, correct” become more extreme: “We chilled beside her liberal glow,/ She dwarfed us by her ampler scale She Summer-like and we like snow.” But in this case the poem is imagined in England, with Enrica as the isolated, single self, whereas a plural self, “we”, defines itself in opposition to Enrica and discovers that it is like England’s sea, “Rock-girt .../ Deep at our deepest, strong and free”.

Rather than assuming the speaker to be a nationally defined, stereotypical “Englishwoman” in both poems, the two poems could be seen to offer two figures, one the mirror image of the other: an Englishwoman in Italy and an Italian woman in England — two different possibilities of being, in which, however, the experience, isolation, remains the same. The Englishwoman in Italy, feeling alienated from a possible “mother” and possible “brothers and sisters”, is analogous to its Italian double, Enrica, faced by a group of stern, chilly females. National identity offers a tool for making the separateness visible. There is, apparently, no possibility of harmonizing the two aspects of the self — it is rather a question of moving or travelling from one to the other.

The idea contained in the title “En Route” could be applied also to “Italia, Io Ti Saluto!”, which stresses the lack of stability, the continuous journeying between two “places”. Here, the mental experience retraces the physical: the self is in no-man’s-land, turned towards “that bleak North”, but having already left “the sweet South”; the journey will be re-enacted by the swallows’ flight. A continuous pilgrimage, therefore, which, as the poems expressly state, provides pain (“tears”), but also pleasure (“sweet”) — it is a sensual experience. In fact, Italy is not addressed as a mother, but as a lover who has “stolen the heart and broken it”, a lover who has forgotten the speaker but who is blessed for warming the heart. Italy and love both signify a place, a paradise from which the self is shut out: “The South lies out of reach.” The self is not only divided in terms of place — the language also heightens the divided self. In Italy, “the half familiar speech” (“Italia”) is a “tongue sweet in mine ears” (“En Route”). Therefore it is not surprising that Rossetti in other poems should want to experiment with Italian.

The Italian versions of some of her *Sing-Song* poems testify to Rossetti’s interest in translation. This is a real linguistic and poetic interest: the poet is clearly trying out various ways of expressing an idea or creating a total effect in Italian. “Bread and Milk for Breakfast”, for

example, exists in two very different Italian versions, emphasizing different aspects of the original poem, and creating a different effect. Through translation, Rossetti is also exploring the opportunities offered by Italian, and these children's verses, very rich in sound and rhyming effects within very compact structures aimed at immediate communication, offer a particularly intense exercise. This interest is confirmed by the last poem in William Michael's *Poetical Works* (entitled by him "Sognando"), which is written in Italian. In the Notes, he reports that Christina had signed the poem "C.G.R., fired by papa's calling this metre difficult" (494). Considering that the poem is pencilled in their father's book of sacred poems (*Il Tempo, ovvero Dio e l'Uomo, Salterio*), this suggests a stronger interest in the metre than in the devotional nature of the poetry: it is craft that can "fire" Christina. All the above would indicate that an interest in craft joins the two halves of the self, and translation is more than a mere linguistic exercise — it is, in fact, a bridge constructed by language and poetry, or a middle ground on which to stand.³

The exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of the self is also central in the Italian poems, to which I now turn. Here, the nature of the self is not analysed on the basis of national identity but on the basis of its relation to love and to God. The poems seem steeped in English tradition, but apparently the medium of Italian gives Rossetti sufficient distance to create a self which expresses its own desires, needs and passions. Through intense use of poetic techniques, through stress on the silenced voice and through continuous reference to a small number of images (the rose, the heart, the lover) with varying meanings, the Italian poems project a self totally immersed in its own existence and the need to test its own voice.

The Italian poems in William Michael's subdivision consist of four poems followed by the twenty-one short verses of *Il Rosseggia dell'Oriente*.⁴ Two of the first poems had been published in a private

3. Rosenblum, 51, remarks: "The Italian poems ... show how profoundly [Rossetti] is a *translator*: of the language of patriarchal tradition, of the language of scripture and into the language of scripture, of English into Italian into English again."

4. The poems were clearly written throughout Rossetti's life: "Versi" dates from 1849 and two more from 1850, the cycle *Il Rosseggia* taking us to 1868, "Sognando", mentioned above, to 1890. The poems are numbered and often have titles. The titles are not a repetition of the first lines and at times suggest ways of reading them. The cycle has a subtitle, "Canzoniere all'amico lontano" ("Songs for the distant friend" in William Michael Rossetti's edition, where the Italian poems

magazine, but other poems were left in manuscript, and the *Il Rosseggiar* cycle was found in the seclusion of Christina Rossetti's desk after her death and was first published by William Michael, who brought the poems contained in the cycle to the attention of the world imprinted with his own biographical interpretation: he calls them "singularly pathetic verses — 'Love's very vesture and elect disguise', the inborn idiom of a pure and impassioned heart" (493). In other words, these poems, developing as they do themes of unrequited love and of a future reunion with the beloved after death, would require a biographical reading and confirm the myth of Christina as the epitome of nineteenth-century woman. In actual fact, the poems are quite varied, particularly firm in tone, and in two there is even some humour. Dorothy Rosenblum is probably more correct in interpreting the history of the poems as an indication that Rossetti "wanted to be known unequivocally as an English poet" (51). In any case, neither the biographical interest nor the similarity with Rossetti's recurrent themes in her English poems receive any attention in the present article, where I intend simply to begin an analysis and introduction of the poems themselves. From the very start, three main features emerge as being central: a complex use of technique, variation on English poetic tradition and the merging of secular and religious themes and images.

The very first poems are clearly exercises in Italian metre and rhyme. "L'incognita" has a very staccato trochaic metre; "Nóbil/ rosa an/ cór non/ crébbe/"; "Nigella" has a very different rhythm, with a dactyl followed by an iamb. "Versi" and "Chiesa e Signore" are both in three parts, and use a similar metre, which will reoccur in a number of later poems: "Fíglia, la/ madre/ dísse". Placed at the opening of the poem, this pattern, of a dactyl followed by two iambs, imposes its rhythm onto the following lines, which are, however, quite varied and occasionally either begin with an initial spondee or a subtle shift into an iambic line. The lines are, in general, basically iambic, but the feminine endings so natural to Italian create a rhythm completely different from English iambic lines.

As for the subject matter, love as a traitor and a dialogue between the Church and God already indicate the similarity with Rossetti's usual themes. More specifically, the speaker explores the nature of the self on the basis of love poetry and of religious poetry. At the beginning, in "L'incognita" ("The Unknown Woman"), the speaker cannot find an adequate image to describe (and therefore, presumably, know) the

can be found on pages 446-53); since the poems are addressed to a male lover, I shall refer to the persona or speaker as "she".

subject. The first image to be rejected is that of the rose, since there is no rose without thorns. The next poem, "Nigella", is closer to a traditional seventeenth-century English love lyric which relies on variations on the comparison with a rose: flowers die, but "you remain to me". The opening of the next poem ("The Church and the Lord"), "Fly, prayer, and tell him ..." is clearly a version of Waller's "Go lovely rose, and tell/ her ...". Here, the rose is replaced by a prayer. It is, however, a very ambiguous kind of prayer, since it consists of a series of urgent questions, closing with what reads like an imperative: turn to your bride (though softened into prayer by the following line, "O my Lord Jesus"). The very brevity of the lines appears as curtness and adds force to the speaker. The speaker's "prayer", which must "fly" rather than Waller's more leisurely "go", is addressed to another substitution, a surprising figure: in the place of Waller's flower-like, female beloved we find a male beloved who soon proves to be Jesus, addressed, the title would suggest, by the Church. So far so good: religious lyrics dressed as love lyrics are more than common, were it not that this Christ is indeed pictured like a retiring maiden, walking amongst lilies and holding a rose. The reader cannot but feel intrigued by the oddness of the scene. Addressed by the urgent appeal, Christ's position at the centre of the poem, a meek religious one, remains extremely weak; to the jealous accusation of the speaker that she should be both rose and lily to Christ, he almost peevishly answers that "If you are a rose to me you should know, since I have thorns on my head"; and the subsequent exhortation to trust that he will come to her aid falls on deaf ears, as this time the speaker urges the prayer not to speak, but to shout out the following:

.... Ahi pazienza!
Te voglio e non altrui,

....
Fragrante più di giglio
E rosa a me sei Tu

[.... Alas, for patience!
It is you I want and no other,

....
More fragrant than a lily
And a rose you are to me]

These lines, sensual, single-mindedly possessive, impatient of religious soothing, firmly place the human passions in the foreground; the static religious image is combined with the static love-lyric pattern

and both are twisted and translated into a different idiom — not just because a typical English Renaissance situation is formulated into Italian, but because the two fixed patterns are shown to be inert and inadequate and cannot satisfy nor express the speaker's urgency. And there is a further twist: an argument is going on between Christ and the speaker as to who is the rose. Christ suggests the speaker is a rose to him, as he can feel thorns, but the speaker retorts in the end that, on the contrary, it is Christ who is to her a rose and more — and indeed not in terms of pain, but of pleasure.

This single-minded stress on the self, a continuous argument in terms of images (the rose, the lily, the lover, Christ) and their meaning, and the power of strong emotions continue in the twenty-one poems of the cycle *Il Rosseggia dell'Oriente*.

Some of these poems are very short and slight, and totally secular. All of these have love as theme, but not in an inert, traditional manner. Instead of mere variations on clichés, we find very compressed, sharp strokes (11):

... quel tuo canto
 È riso o pianto?
 Fido all'infido, tieni in freddo lido
 Spina per nido.
 [... is your song
 Laughter or lament?
 Faithful to the unfaithful, in a cold place you keep
 A thorn for a nest.]

The compression of the ideas is highlighted by paradoxes, which in the last two lines rely particularly on the repetition of the syllable “-ido”. First this repetition creates a similarity in sound between the two opening words (“fido” — “infido”), whose meaning is each other's opposite; then that same syllable is echoed in the image of a “cold place” and also, strikingly, of the “nest” which, again, is the opposite of a cold place. As in the first two words, here, too, what should be opposite is united by sound. Because of its totally different sound, then, the image of the thorn (“spina”) stands out and receives full emphasis. An intricate puzzle of notions and of sounds, therefore. And what about the intensity of poem 17: “To you I recommend/ From time to time/ Square circles,/ Oblong ideas.”

Other poems combine secular love and God. The balance is such that one never knows whether to take the religious or the secular as metaphorical. Occasionally the speaker turns to God and a future

Paradise only at the end of a poem in order to conclude on a note of hope. An example of this is poem number 6, "I am not the rose, but I was next to it" ("Non son io la rosa ma vi stetti appresso"). Here, the present pictures a state of exclusion and exile from the places where the beloved lives; perhaps one day the lovers will be reunited, and God might grant them such a day in eternity. So God becomes merely a way out, a tool for obtaining the beloved. Other poems are more clearly religious, but even here God or Jesus stand for powers which are stronger than time and death and which can unite the lovers. The very last poem in the cycle relies on this idea, and so brings the whole cycle to a close in terms of such love:

Tu che moristi per virtù d'amor,
Nell'altro mondo donami quel cor
Che tanto amai.

[You that died for virtue of love,
In that other world grant me that heart
That I so loved]

The appeal could be read as being so desperate as to be pathetic, in William Michael's terms; but it could also be read as being quite blasphemous. The strength of the persona's voice would support the second reading.

In fact, since, within the various poems, the metaphors and similes of the flower and of the heart switch from Christ to the persona, the two figures become merged — a biographical reading could say that Christina has taken her own name literally. In fact, the merging of the persona, the lover and Christ is something which is steadily built up throughout the cycle. Poem 12 begins with the speaker stating she loves only, and loves best, her own lover, and offers him to Jesus: "Accettalo per me" ("Accept him because of me"). So, Jesus's love for the speaker will save the lover. In the same poem, after reminding Jesus of his words on the cross, to forgive men since they do not know what they are doing, the speaker repeats these words in terms of the lover: he does not know he is rejecting Christ. Christ, it seems, is suffering a fate similar to that of the beloved, both being rejected. In poem 7, the persona had assumed a very specific role: "Io qual Giovan Battista" ("I as John the Baptist"); in poem 12, the "I" could be seen to assume a role very close to Christ's. The closing of the poem states that the lovers will have all they need if all they have is Christ's love; but the lines read

Di mel più dolce Tu, che ben ci basti;
D'amor amabil più, Tu che ci amasti.

[Sweeter than honey are you, and you suffice to us;
More lovable than love, you who have loved us.]

The power that remains with the reader is not God's love or His mercy, but simply "love". The contrast with the title, "O forza irresistibile dell'umile preghiera" ("Oh irresistible force of a humble prayer") could, again, be read as blasphemous; even seventeenth-century religious poems making use of secular or physical love, such as many of Herbert's poems, have a stronger emphasis on the religious love than on a secular solution.

Thus, we have a body of poems written to a "distant friend" which are at times secular, at times like prayers addressed to Christ or God, but in which the persona, the friend or lover and Christ become a trinity united by love. The three figures are further merged by the shifting metaphors and images whose referents keeps changing, in particular the image of the heart. The recurrent use of this image, however, goes further than a merging of the three figures, for it assumes a concrete position of its own, separating the voice of the persona from her own heart, which seems to contain the lover and God. The final poem, again, is a good point from which to observe this particular notion:

Io più ti amai che non mi amasti tu:—
Amen, se così volle Iddio Signor;
Amen, quantunque mi si spezzi il cor,
Signor Gesù.

Ma Tu che Ti ricordi e tutto sai,
Tu che moristi per virtù d'amor,
Nell'altro mondo donami quel cor
Che tanto amai.

[I loved you more than ever you loved me:-
Amen, if the Lord God willed it so;
Amen, although my heart might break,
Lord Jesus.

But You that remember and know all,
You that died for virtue of love,
In that other world grant me that heart
That I so loved.]

Here, “tu” becomes “Tu”: the address to the lover in the first stanza becomes an address to Jesus in the second, with no more change than a capital letter. Then, the speaker begs Jesus to give her “that heart”. Which heart? Logically, the phrase should refer to the beloved’s heart, but syntactically the phrase seems to refer to the heart already mentioned in the poem — the speaker’s own heart. This poem occurs at the end of the cycle throughout which “heart” has reoccurred almost obsessively. In poem 19, for example, “Amico e più che amico mio”, we read:

Cor mio a cui si volge l’altro mio core
Qual calamita al polo, e non ti trova,
La nascita della mia vita nuova
Con pianto fu, con grida, e con dolore.

[My heart, to which my other heart turns
Like magnet to the pole, and does not find you,
The birth of my new life
Was with weeping, with cries and with suffering.]

In the closing lines we read:

Dillo tu stesso a te, dolce cor mio,
Se pur tu m’ami dillo a te ch’io t’amo.

[Tell it to yourself, sweet heart of mine,
If you love me, tell yourself I love you.]

The meaning of the referents needs untangling, but syntactically their use is clear. Here, the “sweet heart of mine” which is being addressed is not, as in most love lyrics, simply a metaphor for the lover. There is a double metaphor, for the lover himself is a metaphor for the persona’s own heart. Although well hidden in language, the implication is that, by way of a pilgrimage of loving in various ways, the speaker affirms her self through love.⁵

The power of the self and the strength of its voice is confirmed by two more features of the Italian poems: the theme of speaking out or being silent — that is, the affirmation of the self through language — and the range of poetic techniques employed.

All the poems are lyrics — yet the stress is often on what is not said: “Lo credo, almen lo spero:/ ma pur *nol dico*” (2); “pensando e *non dicendo*” (6); “Più ma assai più di quel che *non dicea*/ Nel cuor ti

5. See also the later poem “Cor Mio”.

amavo" (9); "Quanto dirti vorrei! ma pur *nol dico*" (13); "Parlarti e *non ti dir mai* che ti bramo" (19, "To talk to you and never tell you how I yearn for you"; my italics).⁶ Yet a great deal is, actually, said: first, the very fact of saying there is more behind what is stated means that depths beyond words are implied. Moreover, the speaker might not have spoken in the situation imagined within the poem, but is speaking now (crying, shouting, in fact) in the verses as we read them: in "Parlarti e non ti dir mai che ti bramo", for example, "bramo" ("yearn for", "crave") is possessive and physical, just as in "Accettalo per me, salva il mio sposo", "sposo" ("spouse") involves possession. The repetition of the theme of keeping words back is balanced by the repetition of the pattern of prayer, of request, and becomes its own opposite — continuous statement. Indeed, the opposite of keeping silent is also stated in so many words in poem 18:

Dissi e ridissi con perenne sete,
E lo ridicolo e vo'ridirlo ancora

I said it and I said it again with unquenched thirst,
And I am saying it again and I want to say it yet again....

We are, therefore, back to the main thrust of "Chiesa e Signore": the single-minded self exploring its experiences and being in terms of love and in terms of religion and stating obsessively its own needs.

We are also back to another issue mentioned at the opening of this essay: the other strong impulse of the poetry is its craft. That this was important to Rossetti in the end we saw in the comment to her "Sognando" (1890); the same interest is clear through most of the *Rosseggiai*. It is not a question of the basic metre used, which, as I said, is iambic. But the length of the lines varies, from 2 to 5 beats, also within the same poem; and the length of the poems varies from 7 and more often 8 lines to 24 lines (poem 12). More specifically, it is the use of language that creates a very specific effect. The diction is not nineteenth-century Italian diction — "siroccia", "aita", "fidanza", "quel che fue fue" are words common in Dante or Tasso. The continuous use of the same images (the rose, the heart, Christ) functions like a

6. Here I follow the spelling of William Michael's edition ("Parlarti, e non ti dir mai che ti bramo": "To talk to you and never tell you how I yearn for you") since the spelling in the *Complete Poems* ("Parlati e non ti dir mai che ti bramo") seems a mistake, but an interesting one, emphasising the self-involvement of the speaker: "Speak to yourself and never tell yourself I yearn for you."

continuous chain of ideas placed in a slightly different light; it is the same effect, though looser, created by a sestina. This effect is further emphasized by the paradoxes — such as those in poem 5 (“my sweet heart/ lost and not lost”), or 11 (“fido all’infido”, “felice ed infelice”), or 16 (“se amaro il dolce fai,/ dolce mi fai l’amaro”) — and by the use of the same word in a different syntactic position, as in “passerà il passato” (“the past will pass”) in poem 7, or, in the first poem, “Amato amante” (“Beloved lover”).

Some lines are evenly balanced in terms of syntax (“Io più ti amai che non mi amasti tu”) or balance opposite ideas (“Ancella questa docile e compiuta,/ E quei tiranno no ma pio signore”). Perhaps stronger than all these is the effect created by repetition with variation, suggesting a voice which muses upon an important idea while examining it from various angles. Poem 6, for example, considers moments of happiness, looking at different aspects of this; but the very repetition could suggest in that poem the illusory nature of such a feeling: “Casa felice”, “Donna felice”, “Giardin felice”, “Giorno felice” (6). Some variations involve differences in tone, from personal to formal, for example, as in “momento che verrà, momento estremo” (9). The careful manipulation of sound makes the lines richer (“la rosa arrossirà nel vago viso”, 6). This is the voice of a very self-conscious self, which definitely does not communicate in a lyrical, spontaneous flowing of feeling, a pathetic “inborn idiom of a pure and impassioned heart”. It sounds rather like a kind of bel canto issuing from a static physical positioning: the poems are arias of an opera being sung. And indeed the closest Italian model for such poems is probably Metastasio:

Grazie agli’inganni tuoi,
Alfin respiro, o Nice;
Alfin d’un infelice
Ebber gli dei pietà:
 Sento da’ lacci suoi,
 Sento che l’alma è sciolta;
Non sogno questa volta,
Non sogno libertà.⁷

The metre of this song is the same as that of “Figlia, la madre disse”, “Vola, preghiera, e digli”, “Lungi da me il pensiere”. The balanced lines, the paradoxes, the intensive use of sounds (here, see line 3 in

7. Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782), “La Libertà”, in *Scrittori d’Italia*, eds N. Sapegno *et al.*, II, part 2, Florence, 1963, 286.

particular, where the sounds in “Nice;/ Alfin” are repeated in inverse order in “infelice”) can be found abundantly in this poem. Perhaps closest in effect are the repetitions in successive lines, which are more insistent in the example from Metastasio (recreating as it does an intense moment of sudden freedom) than in Rossetti’s lines, but are analogous to hers.

In the Italian poems, Christina Rossetti has bridged the two selves by turning to various traditions. That she should have looked back to both religious and secular seventeenth-century poetry is nor surprising; nor is it surprising that she should “translate” the voice of Metastasio into her own medium. But the result is a surprising and exciting merging of passionate control and calculated emotion which places the poet in a unique position; for from the seclusion of her desk Christina Rossetti’s voice is also taking up the middle of a stage to “fly” and “shout” and to sing her self.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: SISTERS, BROTHERS AND THE “OTHER WOMAN”

AMANDA GILROY

In the familial (and familiar) rhetoric of feminism we (those of us who are women) are all “sisters”. A potent vision of a changed political future is embodied in the use of this private relationship between women who are closely bonded as the paradigm for public relationships. In the famous dictum of the women’s movement, “the personal *is* political”. Sisterhood is a powerful political concept, asserting continuities and similarities between women, all of whom are constrained within patriarchal systems. It has a popular ideological currency that is both rousing — “Sisters are doing it for themselves”, as one song puts it, asserting male sexual redundancy — and reassuring: “Sisters, sisters, there were never such devoted sisters”, as the Beverley sisters have been singing since the 1950s (as quite small children, my sister and I sang along to this song, giving our own performance of sisterly devotion, a performance that speaks to women’s interpellation into “feminine” sisterly solidarity). Christina Rossetti, of course, wrote several poems about the dynamics of sisterhood: most famously, “Goblin Market”, but also poems featuring less devoted sisters, such as “Sister Maude” and “Noble Sisters”. That the trope of sisterhood exerts a powerful appeal in feminist criticism has been demonstrated by a whole spate of articles on Rossetti’s “sister” poems.¹

The problems inherent in this trope have not gone unnoticed: on one level the family idiom places women rhetorically in the very sphere that

1. See Janet Galligani Casey, “The Potential of Sisterhood: Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*”, *Victorian Poetry*, 29 (1991), 63-78; Dorothy Mermin, “Heroic Sisterhood in *Goblin Market*”, *Victorian Poetry*, 21 (1983), 107-18; Helena Michie, “The Battle for Sisterhood: Christina Rossetti’s Strategies for Control in Her Sister Poems”, *The Pre-Raphaelite Review*, 3 (1983), 38-55 and “‘There Is No Friend Like a Sister’: Sisterhood as Sexual Difference”, *English Literary History*, 56 (1989), 401-21; Jeanie Watson, “‘Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me’: The Dilemma of Sisterly Self-Sacrifice”, *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Studies*, 7 (1986), 50-62.

secures the reproduction of their oppression, and on another it lends itself to the elision of differences between, and within, women, those differences of class, race, and sexuality, amongst others, which always inflect the discourse of gender, and which, like gender, are historically specific. The risk of essentialism in sisterhood may be demonstrated by the critical tendency to see Laura and Lizzie in “Goblin Market” as composing two sides of a single figure, the narrative trajectory ultimately reconciling sense and sensibility within a shared sororal context.² Helena Michie, a critic who has written at length on the complexity of sisterhood, argues that “Goblin Market” “is precisely about the process that enables one sister to speak for the other and that transforms sexual difference between sisters into replication and reproduction”.³ She analyses the elision of difference, yet a symptomatic textual slip suggests just how difficult it is to resist the reproduction of sameness: “Lizzie’s heroism consists not so much in the potential sacrifice of her life and world as she beckons to the goblin men, but in her refusal to admit difference. This is why her rescue of *Lizzie* takes the familiar form of sharing, of reiteration”.⁴ Laura is subsumed into Lizzie, precisely the movement that Michie is critiquing.

The alternative to the sister may well be the “other woman”, a figure who has become fashionable in feminist criticism. The “other woman” is traditionally a rival to the wife: glamorous, sexy, more harlot than housewife (at least in the realms of fantasy), she is outside the family but disturbs its patterns. Her tangential relation to the family is one reason that this figure appeals to feminist critics, but, if woman is in patriarchal discourse “other”, then the phrase suggests other others, those differences that I indicated sisterhood suppressed: lesbians, black women, third-world women, and the women of other classes, who cannot be contained within, nor adequately represented by, white, western, middle-class feminist rhetoric. Gayatri Spivak suggests that attention to the other woman involves a type of double focus:

2. Close readings of the poem usually recognize that the sisters are not represented in terms of a binary opposition: like Austen’s Elinor and Marianne, they share the same traits but in different proportions. Early commentators had great difficulty in figuring out the moral of the poem (if, indeed, it had one), of deciding, implicitly, who was the “good” and who the “bad” sister, since both, of course, eat the seductive fruit.

3. Helena Michie, *Sororophobia: Differences Among Women in Literature and Culture*, New York and Oxford, 1992, 33.

4. *Ibid.*, 36 (my italics).

However unfeasible and inefficient it may sound, I see no way to avoid insisting that there has to be a simultaneous other focus: not merely who am I? but who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name me?⁵

Jane Gallop quotes Spivak in her own writing on “The Other Woman”.⁶ Gallop reads several mutually implicated texts in a way that foregrounds the issue of the differences *within* gender; she focuses on the lesbian love that threatens heterosexual paradigms of sexual difference, and on the production of class difference as erotic (the attraction between a bourgeois woman and her maid-servant, for example). Though the issues of race and class that preoccupy Spivak and Gallop are outside the parameters of my discussion of Rossetti, Spivak’s questions, in particular, set the agenda for this essay. The point of the double focus she advocates is to acknowledge both proximity and separation, to keep the other woman “other”, not as a gesture of refusal but as a recognition of subjectivity. What will concern me here is how this paradigm might operate in terms of a textual relationship, between women writers, and between feminist critics and the texts they analyse.

I invoke the figures of the “sister” and of the “other woman” at the outset of this essay as a way of situating my reading of Christina Rossetti. Rossetti offers a model of the complex negotiation between difference and sameness that confronts feminist critics; in her poem “L.E.L.” she traverses, I suggest, the terrain between self, sister, and the other woman.⁷ The poem demonstrates the inadequacy of any singular interpretative trope (which is to say that we need to resist the temptation to cast this as a textual romantic dilemma, a choice between the “sister” and the “other woman”). Rossetti is not the most obvious writer to consider in terms of a genealogy of women’s writing. Apart from the poem “L.E.L.”, her only other mention (to my knowledge) of a recent or contemporary woman writer, is her allusion to Elizabeth Barrett Browning in the preface to the sonnet sequence *Monna*

5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “French Feminism in an International Frame”, *Yale French Studies*, 62 (1981), 154-84 (179).

6. See Jane Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body*, New York, 1988, 160-78.

7. There has been little critical discussion of the possible connections between Rossetti and L.E.L., though Angela Leighton argues that Rossetti “is in some ways L.E.L.’s natural successor” (*Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*, New York and London, 1992, 62), and Dolores Rosenblum suggests that “Rossetti ... makes L.E.L. her paradigmatic woman and poet” (*Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Endurance*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Ill., 1986, 15).

Innominate (this is not to say that she has no connection with other women writers, but these relations are not textualized in the same way).⁸ Contemporary critics conjoined Rossetti and Browning only to separate them; as Antony Harrison points out:

[T]hough brief arguments about the relative stature of Rossetti and Browning often appear in the pages of Victorian periodicals, their poems and the authorial self-images their poetry projects are usually acknowledged to be worlds apart. Browning was notorious for engaging social and political topics considered unsuitable to women poets, while Rossetti was canonized long before her death as a kind of poet and saint substantially different from the figure of “woman and poet” Browning sets up as a model in *Aurora Leigh*.⁹

If critics today consider Rossetti alongside another woman, it is usually her transatlantic “sister” Emily Dickinson (a pairing that may have its roots in the inability to fit them into other critical categories).¹⁰ Writing towards the end of the last century Arthur Symons places Rossetti in the company of “poets”, not “poetesses”; paradoxically, it is precisely because she stays *within* the limited private sphere of Victorian womanhood, that she can move out to public success in the ungendered domain of poets:¹¹

In Miss Rossetti we have a poet among poets, and in Miss Rossetti alone. Content to be merely a woman, wise in limiting

8. Kathleen Hickok notes that “[s]ometime before 1869” Rossetti wrote the poem “Autumn Violets” and “sent it as a gift to another spinster poet, her friend Dora Greenwell. Greenwell appreciated it so much that she sent back a lovely poem, ‘To Christina Rossetti’, in praise of Christina’s personal and poetical genius” (*Representations of Women: Nineteenth-Century British Women’s Poetry*, Westport: Conn. and London, 1984, 215). Angela Leighton cites these gifts in reverse order; on Rossetti’s relations with other women poets, see Leighton, 123-29.

9. Antony H. Harrison, *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*, Charlottesville, 1990, 109.

10. See, for example, Margaret Homans, “‘Syllables of Velvet’: Dickinson, Rossetti, and the Rhetorics of Sexuality”, *Feminist Studies*, 11 (1985), 569-93, and Dorothy Mermin (on Barrett Browning, Rossetti and Dickinson), “The Damsel, the Knight, and the Victorian Woman Poet”, *Critical Inquiry*, 13 (1986), 64-80.

11. In a world of “poets” and “poetesses”, poets are male and poetesses female; but the term “poet” masquerades as universal, it is the unmarked term — “poetess” is the marker of difference, femininity, and secondariness.

herself within somewhat narrow bounds, she possessed, in union with a profoundly emotional nature, a power of artistic self-restraint which no other woman who has written in verse, except the supreme Sappho, has ever shown; and it is through this mastery over her own nature, this economy of her own resources, that she takes rank among poets rather than among poetesses.¹²

Women writers, of course, should not be seen as working in some sort of gendered isolation, for they engage, on a range from subservience to subversion, with masculine traditions of writing. On the most pragmatic levels, there are crucial masculine contexts for Rossetti's writing: if she is only infrequently seen in relation to other women poets, she is always “Sister to the Brotherhood”,¹³ while to Dante Gabriel's revising hand and William Michael's editorial endeavours may be credited the canonical Christina Rossetti. What might one mean, in this context, by a “woman's voice”, both Christina Rossetti's own and that of the other woman whose textual voice(s) she might evoke? The answers to this question will gesture towards the wider implications of the connection between gender and writing in nineteenth-century England.

Rossetti's poem “L.E.L.” stands out within her corpus in its direct allusion to another woman poet, but it is the particularity of this connection that is suppressed by Dante Gabriel's revisions — which constitute, in themselves, a “reading” of the poem — and by William Michael's hermeneutic apparatus.¹⁴ I will quote in full William Michael's note to the poem, which appeared in his 1904 edition of the complete poems (the first and only complete edition until the recent appearance of Rebecca Crump's volumes):

12. Arthur Symons, “Christina Rossetti”, in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, ed. Laurie Lanzen Harris, Detroit, 1982, II, 564.

13. See, Andrew and Catherine Belsey, “Christina Rossetti: Sister to the Brotherhood”, *Textual Practice*, 2 (1988), 30-50. Rossetti's status as “sister” does not secure inclusion in the group. Elaine Showalter points out that “[i]n addition to being excluded from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Rossetti was also shut out of what Jan Marsh calls the Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood — the loosely connected group of working-class models, mistresses, and wives around the circle”; Showalter locates an alternative sisterly context, “the newly established Sisterhoods of the Anglican Church”, which stirred Rossetti's imagination (Christina Rossetti, *Maude*, and Dinah Mulock Craik, *On Sisterhoods and A Woman's Thoughts About Women*, ed. Elaine Showalter, London, 1993, xii).

14. Rossetti here refers to Christina Rossetti; her brothers are referred to as William Michael and Dante Gabriel.

This poem was at first entitled *Spring*, and a note was put to the title, “L.E.L. by E.B.B.”. The note must refer to Mrs Browning’s poem named *L.E.L.’s Last Question*; but it is not entirely clear what relation Christina meant to indicate between that poem and her own *Spring*. Apparently she relied either upon L.E.L.’s phrase, which was, “Do you think of me as I think of you?” — or else upon a phrase occurring in Mrs Browning’s lyric, “One thirsty for a little love.” It will be clear to most readers that Christina’s poem *Spring* relates to herself, and not at all to the poetess L.E.L. (Letitia Elizabeth Landon). I suppose that, when the publishing-stage came on, Christina preferred to retire behind a cloud, and so renamed the poem *L.E.L.*, as if it were intended to express emotions proper to that now perhaps unduly forgotten poetess. The poem, as it stands in my sister’s MS. note-book, has lines 1 and 3 of each stanza unrhymed, and she has pencilled a note thus: “Gabriel fitted the double rhymes as printed, with a brotherly request that I would use them”; and elsewhere she adds, “greatly improving the piece.” In other respects the printed *L.E.L.* is nearly identical with the MS. *Spring*.¹⁵

In her title change, Rossetti turns from the general to the particular, from nature to another woman, and specifically another woman poet.¹⁶ William Michael interprets this change in such a way as to shift the emphasis from the particular to the personal: this poem, as “will be clear to most readers”, is really about Christina; the title is a strategic screen (“a cloud”) which William Michael removes to reveal his sister. Thus, he effaces the intertextuality of this poem, substituting a paradigm of

15. Christina Rossetti, *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti, London, 1904, 482-83 (italics in original). Subsequent references will appear parenthetically within the text; “note” following a page number refers to William Michael’s notes.

16. The naming or renaming of her poems is usually the work of William Michael (he gives titles to untitled poems in his edition) or Dante Gabriel (who alters, or suggests alterations, to titles). Alison Chapman analyses Dante Gabriel’s changes as “part of his wider attempt to re-feminize her poetry”; in particular, Dante Gabriel substitutes the title “Goblin Market” for Rossetti’s own title, “A Peep at the Pixies”, which as the latter’s notes suggest was an imitative tribute to her cousin’s (Mrs Bray) “A Peep at the Pixies”. The poem’s dedicatory inscription to her sister, alluding to her role as an author, also disappears. I am indebted to Chapman’s provocative comments on this “erasure of the references to two literary women”. See “Defining the Feminine Subject: Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s Manuscript Revisions to Christina Rossetti’s Poetry”, forthcoming in *Victorian Poetry*. I am grateful to Alison for allowing me to read this article in manuscript.

inner textuality. This is not necessarily to deny Rossetti a place in a female literary tradition, but it is to remove her from any symbolic relation to L.E.L., and to place her within a critical tradition that saw women's art as artless, as merely a continuation of their daily domestic lives, autobiography in verse.

William Michael typically explains Rossetti's poems in terms of the personal; he is always stabilizing Rossetti's enigmatic signifiers, usually by finding biographical referents. At the beginning of his edition, he categorizes poems under the heading “Some Leading Themes, or Key-notes of Feeling, in the Poems of Christina Rossetti”; *Monna Innominate* and “L.E.L.” are placed in the category “Personal Experiences and Emotions” (“Goblin Market”, curiously, comes under “Love of Animals”). In the note to “An Immurata Sister”, he assures the reader that “[t]he lines are clearly a personal utterance” (Rossetti 486, note; see also 487, on “Cor Mio”). Annotating the lines from “Goblin Market” beginning, “For there is no friend like a sister”, William Michael claims that they “are clearly connected with the original inscription of the poem, ‘To M. F. R.’ Christina, I have no doubt, had some particular occurrence in her mind” (460, note). He argues that the two poems immediately preceding this one — including, interestingly, “L.E.L.” — “show a more than normal amount of … self-reproach”. The woman in the poem (“Goblin Market”) and the woman as poet (L.E.L.) are assimilated into the real-life sister, and ultimately the “particular” but unspecified “occurrence” gives way to self-referential “self-reproach”, proleptically confirming the self-centred reading encoded in the longer note to “L.E.L.”. Even more revealingly, the note to *Monna Innominate* mirrors exactly the strategy of effacement and transference which I traced in the note to “L.E.L.”:

To any one to whom it was granted to be behind the scenes of Christina Rossetti's life — and to how few was this granted — it is not merely probable but certain that this “sonnet of sonnets” was a personal utterance — an intensely personal one. The introductory prose-note, about “many a lady sharing her lover's poetic aptitude”, etc., is … a blind interposed to draw off attention from the writer in her proper person (462, note).

In her Preface to this poem, Rossetti acknowledges Barrett Browning as “the Great Poetess of our own day and nation”; for William Michael, the great poetess is just another screen to be displaced.

This pattern of displacement where other women poets are concerned suggests not just that William Michael wants to keep Rossetti in the

appropriate feminine literary tradition, but also that he imposes on Rossetti's texts a masculinist grid of literary genealogy. In other words, within a masculine interpretative model, the poems must be about herself — and this self must be realized over the bodies of other women poets — for a Bloomian "anxiety of influence" engenders a poetics of rivalry, whose solution is the Oedipal short-cut to autonomy. Yet, as Marlon Ross has recently demonstrated, nineteenth-century women's poetry adheres to a different paradigm, something more akin to a politics of sisterhood;¹⁷ differences between women poets — Rossetti marks her separation from Barrett Browning in the Preface to *Monna Innominata* — are not reproduced as rivalry.

The dynamics of the fraternal framework involve, too, a literal rescripting: as the note to "L.E.L." describes, and Crump confirms, Dante Gabriel provided rhymes for lines 1 and 3 of each stanza. This "brotherly request" revises and regularizes the verse form in accordance with his ideal of the proper production of a poetess (metrical smoothness was a key quality). Dante Gabriel flags his allegiance to the feminine "propriety" that during the whole of the century had defined the parameters within which women poets could work (if they wished to attain critical recognition). The formal consequences of mapping an ideology of femininity onto writing are succinctly expressed in Anna Barbauld's short poem, "On a Lady's Writing":

Her even lines her steady temper show,
Neat as her dress and polished as her brow; ...
And the same graces o'er her pen preside,
That form her manners and her footsteps guide.

(ll. 1-2, 4-6)¹⁸

Like William Michael, Dante Gabriel inscribes Rossetti in a particular feminine literary tradition, and, like him, he turns away from other women writers. It is difficult to contextualize the relation between Dante Gabriel's rhymes and the subject of the poem, L.E.L. herself (or her texts). L.E.L. was renowned for the improvised fluidity of her verse forms; as a mellifluous singer, she would in some ways seem to be Dante Gabriel's paradigmatic poetess. Yet Rossetti's poem is, I suggest, dialogically related to L.E.L.'s "Lines of Life", a poem in which,

17. Marlon B. Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry*, New York and Oxford, 1989, 301-03.

18. *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, eds William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, Athens: Ga. and London, 1994, 70.

significantly, the first and the third lines are unrhymed.¹⁹ L.E.L. was also famous for what Germaine Greer calls her “slipshod improvisation with its haphazard assonances and liquid syntax” which “helped to push back the limitations on women writers”, a process which led to the great female form of the verse novel, one high point of which is *Aurora Leigh*.²⁰ Greer’s genealogy helps to suggest the displaced target of Dante Gabriel’s superscriptions: he warns his sister to be on her guard against letting any “taint” of Mrs Browning’s “falsetto muscularity” into her own writing; his objections to Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s subject matter (she does not keep to feminine topics) and “modern vicious style” are translated into the aesthetic agenda of his revisions to “L.E.L” (Rossetti 460-61, note). The combined efforts of devoted brothers, then, constitute a form of male cultural imperialism, which effects the double displacement of other women; that is, L.E.L. (and, implicitly, Barrett Browning) is displaced through Dante Gabriel’s textual revisions and William Michael’s rejection of Rossetti’s naming of L.E.L.

In both L.E.L.’s “Lines of Life” and Rossetti’s “L.E.L.”, we find women writers writing their writing acts into their texts. Both poets suggest metaphors for the act of writing as a woman through an emphasis on the issues of performance and display; indeed, another submerged female presence in both poems is that archetypal woman-artist-on-display, Corinne. I will make a few comments on “Lines of Life” in order to focus the significance of Rossetti’s poem. A number of L.E.L.’s poems display an awareness of the issue of female display. As critics have pointed out, L.E.L. produced herself as an icon of Burkean beauty; she depended on being seen within the frame of one influential paradigm of womanhood.²¹ Crucially, she marketed herself, and came to be seen as, a commodity on display, a living analogue of the ornamental gift books in which she published. Edward Lytton Bulwer, writing in 1831, looks back nostalgically to his Oxford student days and the “rush every

19. I cannot prove that Rossetti read this poem, though she was certainly familiar with L.E.L.’s work. Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel and William Michael were all reading L.E.L.’s verse in 1847-48; I am indebted to Jan Marsh for this information.

20. Germaine Greer, “The Tulsa Center for the Study of Women’s Literature: What Are We Doing and Why Are We Doing It”, in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, eds Cherie D. Abbey and Janet Mullane, Detroit, 1987, XV, 169.

21. See Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London, 1993, 110.

Saturday afternoon for *The Literary Gazette*" to see whether it "contained the three magical letters of 'L.E.L.'"; he continues:

And all of us praised the verse, and all of us guessed at the author. We soon learned it was a female, and our admiration was doubled, and our conjectures tripled. Was she young? Was she pretty? ... was she rich?²²

The sense of sexual excitement here conflates the writer and her text, in a manner that is typical of reviews of women's writing in the first half of the century. While I recognize the potential gap between author and speaker (as well as between Letitia Landon and L.E.L.), a gap closed in contemporary reviews, I would argue that "Lines of Life" does textualize the concerns of a woman/poet, who speaks with the authority of experience.

The poem demonstrates that "Woman" is not a natural but a cultural construct, for social assimilation depends on the manipulation of the semiotics of the body:

Well, read my cheek, and watch my eye, —
Too strictly schooled are they,
One secret of my soul to show,
One hidden thought betray.

(ll. 1-4)²³

The mimicry of social discourse is a process that threatens to erase her own identity:

I teach my lip its sweetest smile,
My tongue its softest tone;
I borrow others' likeness, till
Almost I lose my own.

(ll. 13-16)

Yet note the crucial qualifier, "almost". Significantly, the first person pronouns occur over 60 times in 110 lines, asserting the female self in defiance of societal edicts. L.E.L. enacts but does not internalize the ideology of femininity. One way of thinking about this is to invoke

22. Abbey and Mullane, 156; Lytton Bulwer's review of L.E.L.'s "Romance and Reality", in which these observations occur, first appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*, 32 (1831), 545-51.

23. All references are to the text available in *Women Romantic Poets 1785-1832: An Anthology*, ed. Jennifer Breen, London, 1992, 150-53.

ideology of femininity. One way of thinking about this is to invoke Irigaray's concept of mimicry, which she suggests may be a subversive strategy, destabilizing essentialist notions of “Woman”, by repeating but also exceeding male discourse about woman. In a gesture of spectacular resistance, L.E.L. reappropriates the female body from the parameters of the male gaze, writing herself into subjectivity through the display of her bodily text: “ ... song has touched my lips with fire, / And made my heart a shrine” (ll. 85-86). “Why write I this?” (l.73) asks the poet; her answer is a demand for acts of reading, repeating, rewriting, for her spirit will live through her words:

My first, my last, my only wish,
Say will my charmed chords
Wake to the morning light of fame,
And breathe again my words?

(ll. 93-96)

L.E.L. exploits the pun on the word “lines” in her title, to suggest both the constricting ideology of femininity, the cultural “fetters” (l. 48) which delimit a woman's life and force her to conform to a patriarchal image of “Woman”, and also lines of poetry, which act as a life-line, a guarantee of a continued existence as text. Christina Rossetti fulfils L.E.L.'s desire, inscribing her song in a new text. Rossetti calls attention to the issue of women's writing on several different levels: like L.E.L., she rewrites a scene of performance, but she also evokes prior texts by women (Barrett Browning, as well as L.E.L.). This intertextual inscription asserts continuities: Rossetti's text looks back to the performance of a woman's writing while re-enacting that performance. Her poem creates a symbolic community of textualized women writers, and ultimately women readers, too. Indeed, this symbolic community is foregrounded by the context of publication: “L.E.L.” was written in 1859, and appeared in the first number of Emily Faithfull's *Victoria Magazine* (1863); Angela Leighton points out that this magazine “was set up with the declared political purpose of providing work and a publishing outlet for women — a role which the now defunct annuals once played”.²⁴

24. Leighton, 75. Leighton asserts that the poem was written in 1850; in the absence of corroborating evidence, I have followed Rebecca Crump's dating of 1859; see *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R.W. Crump, Baton Rouge and London, 1979-90, I, 288.

annotated in manuscript with the phrase “L.E.L. by E.B.B”. He asserts that “[t]he note must refer to Mrs Browning’s poem named ‘L.E.L.’s Last Question’; but it is not entirely clear what relation Christina meant to indicate between that poem and her own ‘Spring’” (482). One relation that she clearly means to indicate is the intertextual one between women writers, the symbolic exchange that recognizes and constructs a female literary tradition. The “question” in Browning’s poem — “‘Do you think of me as I think of you?’” — is the one asked by L.E.L. in her poem “Night at Sea”, published posthumously in January 1839 in the *New Monthly Magazine*.²⁵ So, if Rossetti’s epigraph is an act of remembrance, it is routed through another woman’s text, one which is itself an ambivalent elegy, for Barrett Browning expresses both sympathy and antagonism to L.E.L.²⁶ William Michael also suggests that Rossetti is responding to Barrett Browning’s phrase, “One thirsty for a little love”, but the misquotation is a rescripting rather than simply a repetition of the line: this is not the reproduction of sameness which characterizes sisterly devotion (in sartorial terms, the matching outfits worn by the Beverley sisters), nor is it an act of self-assertion, for, as epigraph, the line in quotation marks inscribes otherness — it is not assimilated into Rossetti’s own text.²⁷ As a refrain, the line is resistant to hermeneutic closure, for the repetitions with a difference suggest differences within the self, and between self and other; the refrain may even inscribe an ironic distance between the speaker and her subject (an effect that is more noticeable when the poem is read aloud).

The first four stanzas of the poem are spoken in the first person, as though in the voice of L.E.L., or, more accurately, Rossetti thinking herself into the voice of L.E.L. In “Lines of Life”, L.E.L., as I have argued, represents the social construction of “Woman”, marking the gap between public and private faces; Rossetti takes on in her own poem the

25. Another woman is also involved here, for L.E.L.’s poem responds to Felicia Hemans’s lines “When will ye think of me, my friends?/ When will ye think of me?” in her “A Parting Song”.

26. Barrett Browning wrote another poem about L.E.L., which inscribes an additional link in the genealogy of women writers; see her “Stanzas Addressed to Miss Landon, and suggested by her ‘Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans’”, *New Monthly Magazine*, 45 (1835), 82.

27. Barrett Browning repeats L.E.L.’s question verbatim, but places it within an alternative script: she implies that L.E.L. asked the wrong question, that her desire for personal remembrance pales in the context of national recognition, and ultimately that the personal is presumptuous when placed in the category of the universal (here, Christ’s love and sacrifice).

discrepancy that makes a performance of femininity (making femininity, precisely, a performance), and she juxtaposes this with another gap, that between the eniptiness of the self and the plenitude of the natural order. While the speaker is lamenting, “My heart is breaking for a little love”, the natural world enacts a cruelly indifferent comment on her lack; her feelings are pared down to a negativity emphasized by the symbolism of Spring: “I feel no spring, while spring is bursting forth” (l. 8; I quote here from the 1863 version, for Dante Gabriel revises both rhyme and reason: his version reads, “I feel no spring, while spring is wellnigh blown”). “While” is a key-word in the poem, marking the temporal continuity that antithetically foregrounds spatial and emotional disjunctions: the speaker “turn[s] [her] face in silence to the wall” (l. 3) — she is inside, enclosed, longing for love and feeding on her own insufficiency; outside this enclosure, everything is bright, lively and bursting with sexuality. It is unclear exactly who is speaking in the nature passages — does the speaker see the activities of spring in her mind’s eye, or is this a second, disembodied and detached, commentator? These shifts enact a drama of self and other as positions to be occupied, but which it is difficult to name either L.E.L. or Rossetti.

The speaker can only produce a showy spectacle of female sexuality:

I deck myself with silks and jewelry,
I plume myself like any mated dove:
They praise my rustling show, and never see
My heart is breaking for a little love.

(ll. 22-25)

It is the space between this external “rustling show” and the inner sorrow it conceals, and the gap between woman and nature, that engenders the poem, as the self-reflexive angels, who appear in stanza 5, indicate. They “read it” as a text, “it” referring to the line “Her heart is breaking for a little love”, to the “rustling show”, to the book of nature, and to all the disjunctions between these texts, which ultimately form the palimpsestic text of the poem. Rossetti names the other woman here as “other”, dressed up in the “silks and jewelry” that Rossetti, who adhered to a sartorial poetics of renunciation, would not have worn. But the “silks and jewelry” are also self-reflexive figures; in Angela Leighton’s words, they “are a dress of the imagination which she [Rossetti] continues to put on, and which whispers in her verse of a passion no real-life love could ever match or satisfy”.²⁸

28. Leighton, 77.

and which whispers in her verse of a passion no real-life love could ever match or satisfy".²⁸

The last stanzas of L.E.L.'s poem look to the poet's future as text; the last words of Rossetti's poem also take us out of the here and now. The angel is the mouthpiece of a Christian discourse, advocating patience now and promising future reversals ("true life is born of death", etc), which will establish a utopia of plenitude for the woman whose heart is breaking. This ending can seem escapist, a refusal to deal with the social text of the woman poet, but from another perspective it gestures towards a new modality of textuality, in which desire, both sexual and linguistic, is not contingent upon lack. Rossetti predicts that L.E.L. will be translated to another linguistic realm, where "love shall fill thy girth, / And love make fat thy dearth" (ll. 41-42).

"[W]ho am I? ... who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name me?"²⁹ Rossetti names the other woman as both woman and poet; L.E.L. is both commemorated as a sister poet, and written into another woman's text in a way that acknowledges the play of sexuality and textuality. The sister is an alternative to the degendered angel that haunts Victorian (women's) literature; she is a figure of desire and recognition, as in Barrett Browning's sonnets to George Sand. Rossetti's formal mirroring of L.E.L. reinscribes the connection between them that her intrusive brotherly editors had silenced. On a thematic level, there are both reflections and refractions: L.E.L. in her own poem exploits the rhetoric of display so it becomes an act of self-assertion; Rossetti dons the signifiers of feminine display, but without invoking the faithless seducers or absent lovers that haunt so many of L.E.L.'s texts, yet her "I" exists only in the context of speaking in another woman's voice. Symbolically, the "other woman" names Rossetti as a poet, and her words are reborn in Rossetti's text. These poems are not individual star turns but company performances, in which both women name the other without assimilating her to the self. At the end of Rossetti's poem, we find images of a pregnant female figure, who is the image of a new linguistic realm — a mother in the Kristevan mould, one might say. To name the other woman as "mother", as Rossetti implicitly does at the end of her poem and as I am doing at the end of this essay, is to evoke another influential hermeneutic figure in feminist criticism; it is to add another female family member to the sisters with whom we began; it is to inscribe the otherness within the self, as the word "mother"

28. Leighton, 77.

29. Spivak, 179.

phonemically does. It is to remind us once again that when we talk of a “woman’s voice”, we are always speaking in the plural.³⁰

30. I would like to thank Wil Verhoeven and Helen Wilcox for their helpful comments on this essay.

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WRAPPED IN A DREAM: KATHARINE TYNAN AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

PETER VAN DE KAMP

There is nothing original about labelling Katharine Tynan the “Irish Christina Rossetti”. The phrase was used for years by various reviewers to characterize the shorter lyrics of KT’s, and it stuck for most of her life. “KT” is the acronym which Alice Meynell reserved for Miss Katharine (with a “K” and two “a”s — although she is “Catherine” on her baptismal certificate) Tynan; and it is a sobriquet by which I shall refer to her in the course of this presentation. KT’s indebtedness to the Rossettian school of poetry was noted at the onset of her poetic career, with the publication of her first book, *Louise de la Vallière and Other Poems*, which, with the financial assistance of her totally devoted father, appeared in June 1885. It was hailed by the *Irish Monthly* of June 1885 as “the most important event of the month in our literary world”, while *The Weekly Register* of 16 May 1885 claimed: “seldom [is] poetry at once so sincere and true.” Reviewing the book for the *Dublin University Review*, Charles Oldham, probably hiding behind anonymity because he was a friend of KT’s, after deviously suggesting no knowledge of KT’s identity, by saying “We suppose that the writer of these poems is an Irishwoman …”, notes that “Miss Katharine Tynan has faults: her expression is often wanting in power; her epithets are too often borrowed from Rossetti; but she is a poetess …”.¹ A similar comparison, but then with more favourable connotations, was expressed in *The Tablet*, at the republication of KT’s eminently successful first collection in February 1886:

Another note of her youthfulness is that she “lives by admiration” as well as by “faith and hope”. Words, bits of phrase, are caught

1. Cuttings in the literary estate of Pamela Hinkson; see Peter van de Kamp, *A Catalogue of the Literary Estate of Pamela Hinkson*, Ph.D. thesis, University College Dublin, 1984, 454.

here and there from Rossetti ... without in the least marring the individuality²

KT presumed that the comparison was with Dante Gabriel's work — not with Christina's.

Initially she was delighted. To Father Matthew Russell, editor of the *Irish Monthly* (lovingly referred to in *A Page of Irish History*, the history of University College, Dublin, published by the Irish Jesuits in 1930, as the very caring and very deaf "Father Matt") and for about a dozen years KT's closest confidant, she writes on April 8, 1885:

I am very glad Mr Britten finds a trace of Rossetti's influence in my poetry; no poet affects me as he does. When I am reading him — which is rarely as I have not his poems — I am not on earth at all; I am a disembodied spirit far away from all sordidness and earthiness.³

However, she soon felt its encumbrance, presuming the critics were suggesting that she could be accused of imitating, rather than giving vent to her own divine afflatus. She writes to Father Matt on July 20 [1885]:

As for Rossetti, I had never read a line of him up to two years ago and some of the poems which people call Rossettian were written before I knew him at all — just as with Joan of Arc, wherein Lady Wilde and Mr Britten found a strong likeness to Morris of whom I know absolutely nothing. The choice of words into which I unconsciously fall, with the modern school is quite as good as that used by the older poets. I shall not use "of me" and I shall not say "soft small" and a few similar contributions because they are puerile, but I do not mend my ways so far to please Sir C.G. Duffy. I cast his imitativeness into his teeth!!! And Dante Rossetti does not belong to the Spasmodic school, and "Sister Helen" is worthier a thousand Lady Clares. Dante Rossetti drank the pure fount of inspiration from the old ballads, though he is supposed to have founded a "modern" school, he and his pre-Raphaelite brethren went in the same way for painting to the early painters.⁴

2. *Ibid.*, 457.

3. Jesuit Communication Centre/Jesuit Archives, Dublin; 177 LSS [without envelopes] from Katharine Tynan to Father Matthew Russell, March 1881-18 September 1911.

4. *Ibid.*

That being likened to the Rossettis was a matter of some concern for KT is plain by her repetition of this disclaimer. For instance, in the same month she writes to Wilfrid Meynell, Alice Thompson's husband, editor of *The Weekly Register* and close friend-for-life of KT's:

I begin to feel a little afraid of my reviewers' promises for me. They are mortgaging my future and supposing that I should never do better than I have done! I think though that I am too often called Rossettian; some of the poems which my reviewers call so were written before I had read a line of him, and two excellent judges have found Morris' influence in "Joan of Arc", I being wholly unacquainted with Morris's poetry. I think very often the thought of *a time runs in one's groove*.⁵

Some eight years later, she is still disclaiming the Rossettian influence, writing to D.J. O'Donoghue, first librarian of University College, Dublin, a dedicated scholar of Anglo-Irish literature and a figurehead in the Irish Literary Societies:

I was born in Dublin, but have nearly always lived here. I did not ever try to write till I was 16 or so. The house was always full of books but mainly of a rubbishing character and I was absolutely 20 before I read Tennyson. Rossetti, whose influence was so paramount in my first book I didn't read till I was 23, and most of the Rossettian poems were written before I had read him. I can't account to myself for that. I was at school at Sienna Convent Drogheda.⁶

KT's disavowal is surprising because in actual fact, the reviews of *Louise de la Vallière* claim an impressively wide range of poetic influences, including Dora Greenwell, Dr. Drennan, Speranza, and Eva, Mary of Cork, and (unavoidably) Elizabeth Browning. The *Chicago Tribune* capped it all by suggesting that "KT appear[ed] to be a sort of feminine Tom Moore"⁷ — an androgynous oxymoron which must have amused KT, considering that her father had once boxed her ears for criticising the Irish Bard — and that in a sense she, Yeats, O'Leary and

5. Pamela Hinkson, *The House of Corn*, unpubl. ts., 143.

6. ALS KT to D.J. O'Donoghue, "Feb. 18th 1893"; U.C.D. Archives, LA15/1619.

7. *Chicago Tribune*, 22 July, 1885.

others founded the Irish Literary Renaissance as a reaction to Tom Moore's sentimentalizing Ireland from Holland House.⁸

KT must have realized the reviewers' plight of providing a frame of reference for her verse. Comparisons with other poetesses was unavoidable. That of all the poetic sources she honed in on the Rossettian influence is, arguably, because it was too close to the bone. With a "J.R.", writing in *The Cambridge Review* for 11 November 1885, we may indeed venture "to wonder why Miss Katharine Tynan writes such compound substantives as 'heart-break', 'dream-tears', 'sun-stains', and 'wind-waves', without the hyphen; why she makes all her women pale-faced and golden-haired ...". It seems KT does protest too much.

Composite nouns are paramount in the early KT. The reasons for this verbal boscage and verdure can partly be understood from the central role the romance of literature had played in her early life. In her childhood, KT had borne out the dictum that people endeavour to do what is most difficult for them. Just as many composers have hearing problems, many painters mediocre apprehension of colour, many dancers gammy legs, KT, a voracious reader, had bad eyesight — her eyes being affected by ulcers from the age of five or six. Her reading as a child had been highly eclectic — *The Mysteries of Paris* by Eugene Sue in three volumes with innumerable illustrations, some lurid romances of G.W. Reynolds, a set of Maria Edgeworth, the Poets of *The Nation*, Longfellow, — *Kavanagh* and *Hyperion*, as well as the poems and a travel book, called *Voices of the Rhine* — *The Wide Wide World*, *Tristram Shandy*, Faber's *Tales of the Angels*, *The Near and the Heavenly Horizons* of Madame de Gasparin. She had an unexpurgated Burns, a Milton, a Moore, of course: and the first two volumes of the *Cornhill* where she revelled in Owen Meredith, and "The Great God Pan" of Mrs Browning.

Nothing had pointed to a literary career for her till one day of, what KT thought, her seventeenth year an as yet mysterious slight enduced her to write a poem, which she got printed, albeit somewhat curtailed, in *Young Ireland* on 14 September 1878. In December 1883 she got a

8. In "Some Irish Poets", a lecture given by KT in Tunbridge Wells in 1911, she points out that she, Yeats and their circle "despised Moore", while holding "rightly Mangan's *Dark Rosaleen* to be the first poem yet produced in Ireland". Privately, she had acquainted Father Matthew Russell with this sentiment in a letter, dated "Whitehall, August 8th, 1884": "At an appallingly early age, my ears were boxed by my father because I said I could not read Tommy Moore, and now I feel always that he is inadequate; he could write pretty songs, but he had no heart: passion, he did not like a poet sorrow with the world's sorrow, and Joy in its Joy."

somewhat over-ambitious sonnet on Charles Lamb into the *Spectator*. A year before, her “Address to Ireland” had been exhibited with the publications of the Gaelic Union at the Dublin Exhibition of Irish Arts and Manufactures. This spirited address, in the best Young Ireland fashion, with lines like “Oh, sorrowful fair land! shall we not love thee/ Whom thou hast cradled on thy bounteous breast”, had engendered the hope in one reviewer that “Katharine Tynan will do for our country *to-day* what Thomas Davis, more than thirty years ago did for Ireland”.⁹ *The Graphic* published several of her little poems and paid her a half-guinea for them. This first cheque her father wished to have framed: but she cashed it and bought stuff for a frock. A considerable list of poetry publications ensued, with contributions to the *Graphic*, the *Irish Monthly*, the *Nation*, *Pat's Christmas Box*, the *Boston Pilot*, the *Gaelic Journal*, *Hibernia* and *Tinsley's Magazine*. And even before her first collection of verse appeared, Father Matt devoted an essay to her in *The Irish Monthly*, in 1884.

That first published KT poem does bear some resemblance in its subject matter to the first publication of Ellen Alleyne in *The Germ* in 1850. It was entitled “A Dream”, but curiously enough, KT always remembered it as “In Dreamland” — which is how it is listed in various sources¹⁰ — thus strengthening the resemblance to Christina Rossetti’s “Dreamland”. Oddly enough, Edith O’Enone Somerville, of Somerville

9. E. Skeffington-Thompson wrote in *Hibernia* of August 1885:

In the year 1882 visitors to the Dublin Exhibition of Irish Arts and Manufactures might have remarked, near a door leading into the Round Room of the Rotunda, some very beautiful lines of poetry *Addressed to Ireland*; they were exhibited with the publications of the Gaelic Union, and had been written (at the request of the Rev. J.E. Nolan) by Miss Katharine Tynan. To many who read those verses, the name of the poetess had been till then unknown. The address read:

Oh, sorrowful fair land! shall we not love thee
Whom thou hast cradled on thy bounteous breast,
Though all unstarr'd and dark the clouds above thee blest,
Never our lips can name thy sweet, sad name unmoved;
And if from deeper pain our arms might fold thee,
Were it not well with us, oh best beloved!

What true Irishman or woman can read these words without giving expression to the hope that Katharine Tynan will do for our country *to-day* what Thomas Davis, more than thirty years ago did for Ireland

10. Including Janet Walwork’s otherwise meticulous but as yet unpublished catalogue of KT’s early poems.

and Ross fame, wrote to KT in 1916, asking, “Did you write, long ago, a little poem that ends with the line, ‘And I came from Dreamland, O I came from Dreamland’ …”¹¹

There is no resemblance in the actual execution of the two poems. KT’s is far more akin to what we now consider the characteristics of the Pre-Raphaelites than Christina’s youthful attempt at preferring being entombed in duty to the sensuous presence of passion. In a sense, the two poems are strange mirror images of each other:

A DREAM.

By Katie T.

One night I dreamt of a happy valley,
 Where came not white Winter with frost or snow,
 Where sunlight gilded each verdurous alley,
 Touching each leaf with a golden glow;
 And gay plumed song birds in troops together,
 Each bright hued feather a spot of light,
 Sang gay sweet chants to the fair, calm weather,
 From rosiest dawning till purple night.

Daintiest blossoms, deep hued and tender,
 Shone through the grasses, all emerald green;
 Delicate fern fronds, tall and slender,
 Hung o'er a rivulet passing between;
 Silvery its flowing, and cool its plashing
 Its soft drops dashing a pearly shower
 O'er thirsty flowerets, and merrily splashing
 The brown bee seeking his honey dower.

Roses, crimson snow-white, and creamy,
 Their passionate sweetness displayed to view,
 Bearing, each in its gold heart dreamy,
 Odorous vapours, distilled with dew.
 Queenly lilies, pallid and saintly,
 Quivering faintly as south winds pass;
 Their silvery whiteness contrasting quaintly
 With pansies purple, amid the grass.

But ah! my vision has passed, not knowing,
 Alas! that rose red should ever pale,

11. ALS from Edith Somerville to KT, “Drishane House, Skibbereen, Co. Cork, July 17.16”, Carbondale, Special Collections, Morris Library, Katharine Tynan Collection, 55/8/20.

That white of lily should lose its glowing,
That golden sunlight should fade and fail.
Ah me! that ever such sweetest seeming
Should be but dreaming of Winter night,
Only to wake to the grey dawn, deeming
Its coming colder, for so much light.

Dreamland

[by CGR]

Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep:
 Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
 Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
 And water springs.
Thro' sleep, as thro' a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
 That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast;
Her face is toward the west,
 The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain;
She cannot feel the rain
 Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
 Till time shall cease:
Sleep that no pain shall wake;
Night that no morn shall break,
Till joy shall overtake
 Her perfect peace.¹²

12. *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R.W. Crump, 3 vols, Baton Rouge and London, 1979-90, I, 27.

KT and Christina Rossetti were the same age when they wrote these poems. And the passing from adolescence to maturity may account for the uncanny similarity in the feeling of yearning — the “Sehnsucht” of *Sturm und Drang* — that informs both poems, as it may underlie the desire for timelessness in both — “I dreamt of a happy valley,/ Where came not Winter” in KT’s, and “Where sunless rivers weep/ Their waves into the deep/ She sleeps a charmed sleep/ Awake her not” in Christina Rossetti’s.

Dreams take pride of place in the poetry of both women. Christina’s “Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed/ For a dream’s sake” applies equally to KT, whose early poetry is filled with dreams, from being “Wrapt in a dream of love”, to “And now and then our dreaming ’gan to sing”.¹³ Indeed, if we are allowed to flirt with biographical fallacy, the surreptitious fear of taking on burdensome beauty that underlies both poems may be explained as more than just a *topos* germane to girls on the inevitable doorstep of womanhood. It may hint, as I think it does, at a shared personality trait: both Christina and KT suffered from severe neuralgia with unavoidable physical consequences, both lived, and died, in an inescapable isolation of some sort or other (in the case of CGR commonly explained as duty or even religious mania, in the case of KT a number of physical illnesses, such as psoriasis, which had their cause in mental torpor) that ran counter to their natural sociability, both found succour in religion and both searched for the religious confessor who would provide that succour.

In this context, it is apt that KT’s first collection was named after what Madame de Sévigny had called France’s “little violet”, a “martyr of love”, eternalized by Alexandre Dumas (a translation of whose *Louise de la Vallière* must have caught young KT’s fancy), *maîtresse* of Louis XIV, relinquishing love at the age of twenty-six to join a strict Carmellite order as Sister Louise de la Miséricorde. To dream of eternal love, unsoiled by the common round of a relationship, sleeping a charmèd sleep till time shall cease, experiencing *agapè* with *eros* just around the corner, was a state of perfection for a young Irish woman who had been called the “ugly duckling” of the family by an inattentive servant.

That her poetic personality was akin to Christina Rossetti’s did not escape KT’s writer friends. Jane Barlow, the author of *Strangers at Lisconnel* and *Irish Idylls*, prose fictions to which KT supplied the Irish brogue, for instance observes in a letter to KT of September 15, 1893:

13. Poetry notebook, signed “Katie Tynan, August 18th 1885”.

I think Christina Rossetti and Jean Ingelow are worth all the men poets at present alive (I don't count Swinburne as living). I put Christina Rossetti first. I always put your books beside hers, as you are spiritually akin. And I put you at the head of our own poets, and I feel a conviction that I will keep you there, even when I become better acquainted with the others' works which I hope to do some day.¹⁴

This view is reiterated by May Sinclair, the first writer to introduce Dujardin's "style indirect libre" into English Literature, and a minor champion of *The Yellow Book*. Apropos of KT's *Miracle Plays* (1902), composed on the instigation of Yeats, she writes:

As for the "Miracle Plays", I love them. Chiefly, I suppose, because of their beauty and crystalline sincerity and the lovely lines that come like the flashing of angels' wings. I don't know anything, except some of Christina Rossetti's Poems and Henry Vaughan's (at his highest and best), that made the things of faith so real to me. And as I have no faith, that is good testimony.¹⁵

We can fairly accurately establish when KT first read the Rossettis. As we have seen, she wrote to D.J. O'Donoghue that she did not read Rossetti till she was 23. KT thought she was born in February 1861, until she discovered late in life that her actual birth date was January 23, 1859. This means that she claims to have first come across Rossetti in 1884. In actual fact, a letter from her to Father Matthew dated May 21, 1883 betrays her knowledge of Dante Gabriel's "The Blessed Damozel". She writes about one of the forgotten "Miriams of Ireland":

Is not Una Ashworth Taylor wonderful? Where did she get that exquisite line "The mists for clothing, and the room for heat" you copied? Don't you think her opening was an unconscious plagiarism from D.G. Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel"? I think she is going to be the woman poet of the age. I am going to write a poem about her and send it to the "Nation" where her poems have appeared.¹⁶

14. ALS Jane Barlow to K.T., The Cottage, Sept. 15th 1893; Carbondale, Special Collections, Morris Library, Katharine Tynan Collection, 55.

15. ALS May Sinclair to KT, "13 Christchurch Rd., Hampstead, Jan. 12. 1902"; Van de Kamp, 1984, 239.

16. See Note 3.

On July 26 of the same year, she confesses swooning over DG's poetry in the company of Father Matt's sister, Rosa Mulholland, Lady Gilbert — much-overpraised by Dickens, and a person whom KT never really got on with. She writes to Rosa's brother:

I felt very small in Rosa Mulholland's presence, although she was deliciously kind. I stammered and could not put two words together. I always stammer a little when very nervous I was so delighted to find that we liked nearly all the same poems and the same heroes we both love Rossetti, Mrs Browning, S. Francis d'Assissi, Gustave Doré, and I forgot how many others.¹⁷

The truth of the matter is that KT was Rossetti-struck. By 1885, the Rossettis take a prominent place in KT's reading.¹⁸ This place they kept for another decade. In KT's notebook for 1887 — from which the first few pages are torn — we know that she has borrowed (and/or lent, though it seems unlike O'Leary to borrow rather than lend books), Hall Caine's *Rossetti* from the O'Learys; from K. Ross "Rossetti 2nd volume", from Fr. Fitzpatrick "Rossetti, 1st vol.; Preludes". All but the first were marked as duly returned. From KT's notebook for 1891, we learn that she has borrowed from and returned to Mrs Meynell [?] "Rossetti one vol. & Christina Rossetti's *Pageant*".

The Rossettian touch seems to have made itself felt in her private life as much as in her poetic. We now remember KT for the four or five years of her friendship with Yeats (in fact, he did propose probably on the instigation of his father, in 1892 — and was turned down, because, frankly, she considered him "a bore"¹⁹). But her first real love was an Oxford aesthete called Charlie Fagan, and part of the reason of KT's fascination with Fagan is exactly his Rossettian dimensions. She writes to Father Matt on March 12, 1884:

Charlie the poet came to me here on Sunday and spent the day with me. I had tea with him yesterday in his chambers in Fleet St. He is a wonderful boy; I have a book with some of his poems

17. *Ibid.*

18. This is apparent from KT's notebook, signed "Katie Tynan, August 18th 1885/ May 28th 1886"; it contains a list, presumably of her book acquisitions for that period, which includes editions of poetry by DGR and CGR.

19. See Peter van de Kamp, "Some Notes on the Literary Estate of Pamela Hinkson", *Yeats Annual IV*, ed. Warwick Gould, London, 1986, 183.

here, and I must copy one especially of them for you before I give it back. It has a good deal of the beauty and horror of Dante Rossetti. There is a curious morbidness in all his verse, and in his water colours and etchings (he is an artist also) much of the same tendency is apparent.²⁰

Charlie Fagan died within a year of settling in India, where he tried to teach Tennyson to the Hindus. Around this time Yeats enters KT's horizons, but the passionate nature of her commitment to the Oxford aesthete shines through verse after verse entrusted to her poetry notebooks from 1885 to 1887 — verse characterized by its "curious morbidness". Undoubtedly, it must have been at KT's express wish that Fagan's poetry was included in the poetic testimony of a budding Irish Literary Renaissance, *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland* (1887), a joint venture of, among others, Yeats and KT, masterminded by O'Leary. Charlie is undoubtedly the person visited by KT's poetic persona in a dream in "Dreaming", published in *Shamrocks*:

DREAMING.

Once, in a dream-hour's ghostly glimmering light,
 One set her face for her love's dwelling-place;
 With flying feet, and heart that beat apace,
 The wan dream-soul went out into the night;
 Adown pale paths she passed in breathless flight,
 Nor noted how the dear, familiar ways
 Were stranger grown in this sad, strange moon's rays
 Lo! and at last her love's home came in sight.

Yea, at his door she knocked and cried till morn,
 And moaned around his house, and knocked again,
 Calling on love's dear name; but love was dead;
 Empty was all, and desolate, and forlorn,
 Lost like her heart; and still the weary rain,
 And the wind's voices wailing overhead.

KT's moribund tone is not dissimilar from Christina's, and it is probably with the hope of receiving the approval of a kindred spirit that KT, on the advice of Father Russell, sent a copy of the first edition of *Louise de la Vallière* to William Rossetti, whom she must have known to be the custodian of the family, on 5 August 1885. The young KT's

20. See Note 3.

eagerness to acquaint those whom she adulated outshone her naiveté. She did exactly that which Gabriel Rossetti had warned Hall Caine against:

I must say I rather doubt the wisdom of writing without introduction to such men as you mention. A superior man runs the risk, by doing so, of being confounded with those who are perpetually directing correspondence to anyone whose name they have heard — and the bibliographic and autograph-hunting tribe whose name is legion I know the sort of exclamation that rises to the lips of a man as much beset by strangers as (say) Swinburne, when he opens a letter and sees a new name at the end of it.²¹

DG's advice was probably family knowledge.²² It did not dissuade William from expressing his acknowledgement with his familiar kindness. He writes to KT on 9 August:

My dear Madam,

I received your letter of 5 August, & read it necessarily with great interest & pleasure. The volume of poems came about the same time. I opened it, I confess, with some trepidation — fearing lest it might turn out that the poems were not of such calibre as to enhance or sustain the interest excited by the letter. The first poem wh. I read was "The Flight of the Wild Geese" — followed by several others, say a good third of the volume. I at once perceived that there was no cause for trepidation; but that the poems do really belong to the class *poetry*, & not merely to the class versification, more or less accomplished, more or less rooted in prose. It wd. be wrong, & indeed impertinent, to try to flatter you, or to overstate my real opinion (whatever that may be worth) of the kind & degree of merit wh. I perceive in the poems. I found many beautiful, tender, touching & deeply felt things in them: & to say beyond this that I truly regard you as worthy to write poetry & to rank as a poetess is to say all that can be in demand. It is clear to me that you have only to go on & to cultivate your faculty, & that you will not miss your mark.

The volume appears to me on the whole to be more indicative of an influence from my sister's work than from my brother's —

21. Hall Caine, *Recollections of Rossetti*, intro. Jan Marsh, London, 1990, 70-71.

22. KT read Caine in 1887, and expressed her abhorrence about the book in a letter to William Rossetti in 1888.

who (by the way) had not in any strong sense of the word a “grey head”: his age was not quite 54. I mentioned the matter yesterday to my sister, reading her your letter; & assured her that, if she were to receive a copy of the book from you, she wd. heartily like some things in it. This she is quite prepared to assume: so, if you are still inclined to send her a copy, pray do so. Her address is 30 Torrington Sq., London, W.C. She — and also our aged Mother still among us at the age of 85 — are curious to know what is the “beautiful story” of my brother’s life to wh. you refer.

I shd. like you, my dear Miss Tynan, to select from the enclosed list of photographs after my brother’s work any half dozen that you wd. particularly like to possess: & I shall then do myself the pleasure of ordering them for you. I have put an ink-mark agst. those wh. wd. I fancy, on one ground or another, more specially meet your liking: but this is of course mere guesswork, & you wd. choose as you prefer.²³

KT did select half a dozen of the Hollyer photographs. They were proudly exhibited in the poetic room in Whitehall, Clondalkin, furnished with loving parental care by her father. Later, after KT, in 1891, married the handsome and talented, but irascible, Henry Albert Hinkson and moved to Ealing, they remained prime exhibits, commented on by many of the interviewers who visited KT.

William’s letter reached KT on a Sunday after Mass, as she was shelling peas in the garden. Its reception formed one of the highlights in KT’s life, and she commented on William’s responsiveness throughout her life. However, it was Christina’s response she awaited with an eagerness that shines through her letters to Father Matt at the time. She sent *Louise de la Vallière* to Christina Rossetti, inscribed “Miss Christina Rossetti from the writer — offered with humility and reverence to the first of living women poets by the last and least. August 1885”.²⁴ Christina’s letter came on August 19, 1885. It read:

My dear Miss Tynan

I think you will forgive the delay which has preceded my thankful acknowledgement of “Louise de la Vallière” when I tell you it was occasioned by my wish to read it before writing to you.

23. ALS William M. Rossetti to KT, “5 Endsleigh Gardens, London, N.W., 9 August ‘85”, The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas at Austin.

24. Book dealer Sotheran’s catalogue 774 [1921 approx.] lots 1746/1748.

Now, having done so, I can express sincere admiration of your poetic gift. But beyond all *gifts* I account *graces*, and therefore the piety of your work fills me with hopes far beyond any to be raised by music of diction. If you have honoured my form by thinking it worth imitating, much more may I your spirit.

I think you would have been charmed by our dear Gabriel had you met him; so many were charmed, and so many still remember him. My brother William I know is sending you his photograph: I hope it will confirm your prepossession.

And I am sending you my last little book "Time Flies": please accept it as a small response to your kind overtures. I have ventured to write in it your name without the formality of "Miss" — an omission I like towards myself often, so I hope you will not dislike it.

Pray allow me to remain
Very truly yours
Christina G. Rossetti.²⁵

Christina had inscribed *Time Flies*: "Katie Tynan from Christina G. Rossetti".²⁶ The familiarity — no one apart from her father and Alice Meynell called Katharine "Katie" — seems indicative of the real openness — if not enthusiasm — with which brother and sister Rossetti received *Louise de la Vallière*. That both parties were intent on establishing a friendship is clear from William's second letter, which arrived only two days later — and which KT surprisingly hardly ever commented on.

That oil-portrait of my brother by Holman Hunt, wh. you saw in the Grosvenor Gallery, is not exactly to be accepted as a likeness of what he was in his later years. In or about 1859 (a very remote date) H. did from life a portrait of my brother in pastel or coloured chalks: it is in my hands. After my brother's death H. borrowed that portrait & painted from it & from reminiscence the

25. Christina Rossetti to KT, "30 Torrington Square-London-W, August 19. 1885", Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

26. Pamela Hinkson's catalogue, "The Katharine Tynan Collection. List Of Literary Autograph Letters Manuscripts, Printed Rare Books, First Editions, Etc. The Property Of Miss Pamela Hinkson" contains the following entry:

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA; BOOK; "TIME FLIES. A READING DIARY" (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1885). Autograph Inscription "Katie Tynan from Christina G. Rossetti", given to K.T. by Christina Rossetti in 1885.

oil-head wh. you saw, & wh. might be understood as representing my brother at the age of 30 or 32. It is like, but not *exactly* like: the eyes are certainly too large (tho my brother's were full-sized), & the expression is somewhat too mild & beaming: my brother had a dominant rapid sort of look.

The story is true that, when his wife died in Febr. /62, my brother buried his M.S. poems in her coffin, as a voluntary act of self-abnegation. It shd. however be added that as years wore on it became a serious matter to him to be deprived of the poems: he had no other copies of them, & he wanted them, as forming the bulk of any volume he might be minded to publish. At last therefore in 1869 he recovered the poems from the coffin & they form probably 2/3 or nearly so of his vol. of 1870.

When you see his grave at Brightington, you will find it marked by a finely designed Irish cross, with some figure bass-reliefs. This is the work of his oldest & best friend the painter Ford Maddox Brown (my father-in-law). Brown is now modelling a bust of my brother, to form part of a fountain-monument wh. will I hope be erected in front of my brother's house in Chelsea.²⁷

That KT hero-worshipped the Rossettis is beyond doubt. It is reflected in her reading in 1885 and 1886. Her father, for instance, gave her a present of Gabriel's *Ballads and Sonnets* on 1 September 1885.²⁸ And the dark blue and gilt 1881 edition of Gabriel's poems which KT bought in April 1885 contains two letters from the Rossettis — undoubtedly the ones that William sent her for the autographs.²⁹

27. ALS William M. Rossetti to KT, "London N.W./9 August /85", Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

28. KT's copy of *Ballads and Sonnets* (Fourth Edition, London: Ellis and White, 1882) is inscribed "To Katharine Tynan from her Father. Sept. 1st 1885". The book has inside covers and first and last pages of blue illuminated paper, which looks like a William Morris design, then fashionable.

29. Catalogue, "The Katharine Tynan Collection. List of Literary Autograph Letters Manuscripts, Printed Rare Books, First Editions, Etc. The Property Of Miss Pamela Hinkson" contains the following descriptions:

... letter from "Gabriel" to his brother, "My dear Wm." dated "Thursday." He hears report that Mrs. [Stillmann?] has come to London. Will William "right write a line" as to anything he may know of it?

... letter from Christina to "My dear Gabriel" naming a day to meet "so far as human intention can ensure events." Signed "Your affec. sister, Christina G. Rossetti." Dated "Monday night."

It is therefore with considerable trepidation that KT paid William a visit for two hours on 29 December 1885. Her account book at the time shows two major expenses, listed as “Brown Thomas” — Dublin’s most prestigious fashion store — amounting to the grand total of £16. The money for the outfit had not been made from poetry. She writes to Father Matt on October 28, 1895:

Kegan Paul & Co are not tempering the wind to the lamb they have shorn which is me. I hope that quotation is not profane, — for I hate profanity. But, they won’t give me any money. I have sent their letter to Mr Meynell, — but the gist is, that the profits of the first edition won’t anything like pay for the second. If the second edition were not to be gone on with, they should have a small sum to my credit, — about £8. Just imagine £8!!! from a sale of at least 260 copies after paying for advertising, etc., out of the other 240. I wrote in the most amenable fashion and told them to go on with the second edition, and I felt “I was quite safe in leaving my book in their hands.” Which I didn’t, really, having called them in my heart “beasts,” but one must dissemble How lucky it was that I sold £10 worth of copies myself. I was immensely disappointed as I thought I was going to buy a rich mantle to visit the Rossettis in, but I proposed and K.P. & Co. disposed of the profits.³⁰

KT’s father must have chipped in a few pounds to allow KT to become “poetic-looking”. She acquired a red Liberty’s frock, and must have looked very much the part of a poet.

The visit to William went off in splendid style. She reports:

The Rossettis were all our fancy painted them. I liked him so much and he told me so many things, and showed me some of his brother’s pictures and his father’s work in such a kind way. He is preparing an edition in two volumes of all his brother’s poems including “Dante and his Circle”. He showed me “the Germ.” He told me he was so overwhelmed with books of poetry that he had begun to acknowledge their receipt by a postcard when they came and then take no further notice of them. I said “but why were you so wonderfully good to me?” — to which he replied “O but we thought your book contained absolutely beautiful things.” He liked Miss Noble’s sonnets greatly, found all the poems to contain beautiful refined thoughts, liked her strong religious fervour and her feeling for beauty, noticed a strong influence from his brother

30. See Note 3.

— but found her lacking in individuality. I have not told her this last. He spoke bitterly about Buchanan's attack on his brother, which he described to me at some length; he has not forgiven Buchanan despite the dedication of "God and the Man," — and I was surprised at his strong feeling because he is very gentle. I had tea with him. I told him a good deal about R.M.'s book.³¹

"R.M.'s book" was Rosa Mulholland's *Vagrant Verses*, which KT had sent to various writers, including Christina, whose response proved disappointing:

Miss Rossetti wrote yesterday that she had not had time to form an opinion on it, though she hoped to be able to say more by and bye. I wish she would write boldly to people she doesn't know, as I did³²

The following day (December 30) KT visited Christina. Alice Meynell had reinforced KT's expectations of meeting a saintly poet. And one can imagine KT all dressed up, books in hand, and quotes in mind, ringing the doorbell of Torrington Square, as she had rung the doorbell of Speranza, and was going to ring a host of literary greats on that London holiday. She writes:

I went to see Miss Rossetti the next day. She is a cheery (!!!) middle-aged lady, low-sized, with dark skin and large eyes; she must have been always plain-looking, I think. She was delightfully kind, — called me her friend and said she was glad to have me for a disciple. I told her what you had said about "Time Flies"; and she seemed much pleased. She said she had had the strongest inclination to send it to Cardinal Manning, — and was only withheld by a fear lest he should not like it. The mother was there, a tiny woman with a fine strong-marked face, very intelligent and following all we said despite her 86 years. I spoke about Christina's dedications to her, and she looked up and said "My affectionate Christina." I told Miss R. that her brother had said "Maria and I were never very remarkably clever people, but there are none of us fools." She said "the dear old fellow!" She told me how they all used write poetry as children. She lent me "Cranford" to read; thought I would like reading it because it is her favourite book; wished she could give it to me, but it is a present to her from her "affectionate Uncle, F.H. Polidori."

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

Yesterday came “A Pageant” to “Katharine Tynan from Christina Rossetti, New Year 1886,” and such a kind letter which I should send only I have gummed it in the book I should like to see “the Birthday Book for Our Dead” if you have it.³³

The three parenthetic exclamation marks signal the disappointment of the visit — Christina had a knack of projecting a different image of herself than KT expected. KT was in the middle of mourning, even though she kept her love for Charlie Fagan hidden to her notebooks and her letters to Father Matt. She had probably expected to commune with a spirit equally melancholic. Her disappointment is plain from the many reports she published about Christina’s unexpected pragmatism — her sensible shoes, her short dress, her matter-of-fact way of speaking. In an uncorrected typescript, entitled “Alice Meynell”, she recalls “Christine [sic] clumping about in serviceable shoes, to show that she was not the sad personality of her poems”; and in *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, she writes:

I had been prepared to meet her as a saint I was somewhat taken aback when she entered the room, wearing short serviceable skirts of an iron grey tweed and stout boots. It did not at all consort with her face or with her poetry. One knew of her even then as somewhat of an invalid. I should have expected to find her in trailing robes of soft, beautifully coloured material like all the

33. *Ibid.* Pamela Hinkson’s Catalogue contains the following:

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA; Letter to “My dear Miss Tynan,” from 30 Torrington Square, W.C. Evidently soon after KT’s visit to her in Winter 1886, refers to KT’s “willingness to accept my proffered ‘Pageant,’ which is now going to her. Thanks K.T. for several poems. One, ‘Sanctuary,’ has a very touching feeling, and may easily go to the reader’s heart because I think it comes from the writer’s.” Mentions “sad story of an umbrella” which she had lent K.T. Hopes “Cranford” is making amends “for whatever trouble the umbrella has caused. (Evidently she had given K.T. “Cranford” and K.T. perhaps has lost the borrowed umbrella.) Concludes “Most of all let me thank you for the visit I like to have received ...” — letter pasted into the book.

ROSSETTI, CHRISTINA; BOOK; “A PAGEANT AND OTHER POEMS” (London, Macmillan & Co, 1881) autograph inscription, “Katharine Tynan from Christina G. Rossetti. New Year 1886.” Dark blue, gilt-tooled binding. First edition). Loose within it is an envelope addressed to “Miss Tynan” at her home address, postmark April 23, 1888. The envelope is a Post Office printed stamped one. Stamped small seal design on flap.

writing and painting world of that day. Her dress did not at all go with her spiritual face and the heavily-lidded wide-apart eyes which one only finds in a highly-gifted woman. The heavy lids were less of a beauty than they had been when her brother delighted to paint them.

I certainly believe that she made the worst of herself — perhaps as a species of mortification. She even affected a short, matter of fact way of speaking which took me somewhat aback at our first meeting. She put one off sitting at her feet completely. "I wrote such melancholy things when I was young," she said, "that I am obliged to be unusually cheerful, not to say robust, in my old age."

At a later date I told her how taken aback I had been by the dress and the boots, and I remember how she laughed. As that impression disappeared completely on further acquaintance, I have sometimes imagined that she set herself deliberately to undo my expectations of her.³⁴

KT, being myopic, was acutely sensitive to voices; she judged a person instinctively by voice. We know that, even though Christina's pronunciation was very English, the quality of her voice was distinctly Italian. KT herself spoke with a brogue, and to an Irish ear, Christina's Italian phonetic supra-segments could well have been mistaken for "a short, matter-of-fact way of speaking". As for the modesty of Christina's apparel, it is in line with the word of the scriptures, I Ti. 2: 8,9 "I will ... that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array", and Matthew 6:30, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith". For someone who used to pick up pieces of printed paper off the street, lest it should bear the Holy Name and be trodden upon, such a following of the Bible is hardly surprising.

Christina wrote to Lucy about this first visit that KT puffed her up like puff paste.³⁵ However, they seemed to have established some sort of lasting acquaintance. The two poets met and corresponded. *Shamrocks*, KT's second collection of verse, was dedicated to the Rossettis, after Rosa Mulholland had refused to accept the honour of having a book dedicated to her. KT tried out various permutations of the dedication; on February 3:

34. Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, London, 1913, 158.

35. Frances Thomas, *Christina Rossetti. A Biography*, London, 1992, 339.

"To William Michael Rossetti
in remembrance of generous kindness and encouragement."

and on February 15:

To Rosa Mulholland
in token of enduring affection
I dedicate this book.
(?)

After consultation with William Rossetti, KT approached Christina, and got the following reply:

[black-edged]
2 Beechwood
Abbey Road — Torquay.
February 21.

My dear Miss Tynan

Your letter followed me out of town where I am recruiting and proposing to stay till mid March.

Thank you for honoring kindness. I shall like a Dedication from you, and shall in addition like my name to be associated with my brother's. *He* is at San Remo with wife, and two elder children, so perhaps his answer may be delayed a little beyond mine.

Wishing you worthy happiness from your new volume, I am

Truly yours
Christina G. Rossetti.³⁶

The published dedication read:

TO
WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI
AND
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
I OFFER THIS BOOK
WITH HOMAGE, AND AS A THANKSGIVING.

36. ALS Christina Rossetti to KT, "2 Beechwood, Abbey Road — Torquay. February 21", Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

There is sincere respect in these words; in fact, in tone they contrast sharply with KT's next dedication, this time accepted, to Rosa Mulholland, which read: "GREETING!".

William expressed his thanks for the dedication in a rambling letter, showing some unease of spirit, as well as sympathy for the Irish cause:

[Black-edged]
 5 Endsleigh Gardens.
 N.W.
 6 July /87
 My dear Miss Tynan,

This morning I received your letter, & take blame to myself for not having at an early date acknowledged with thanks the receipt of your book. The simple fact is that constant occupation has as yet presented my even beginning to read it: official occupation all day, literary occupation most of the evening, family matters, friend in the house, a dying relative &c. I shall read the book: & when I do so I confidently reckon upon finding in it the same charm of feeling & treatment as in your previous work, & mellowing ripeness of execution. What I intended was to wait until I cd. read the volume, & then write to you my thanks & my views.

If I owe you an apology, please accept it, like a kind-hearted Irishwoman.

Thank you, we are all reasonably well at present: my wife back from Bournemouth towards last day of May.

That vile Coercion-bill has been much in my thoughts of late. It seems destined to pass, & to be one more link in the long clanking chain of the hatred wh. Ireland owes to England.

Yours very truly,

W.M. Rossetti

Of course I observed & mentally thanked you for the dedication to your volume. — I see I have some blots on paper (as well as on conduct) to apologise for.³⁷

About this second collection of poetry, *Shamrocks, The Month* wrote in September 1887:

37. ALS William M. Rossetti to KT, "5 Endsleigh Gardens. N.W. 6 July /87", Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Like all intense and fine natures she is imitative. She not only imitates the design of other poems, but imitates their very style and expression no one who has read Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "A Last Confession" and "The Blessed Damozel" can fail to perceive that author's influence in "The Angel of the Annunciation." We do not mean to insinuate that there is any conscious imitation — but there is such a thing as being unconsciously influenced.

KT's angel and the beloved of Dante Rossetti's damozel both have an aureole around their head, but that, apart from a few lilies and some colours, is about as far as the resemblance goes. The most obvious source of the poem is Dante Gabriel's painting "Ecce Ancilla Domini!"; KT skilfully depicts its mystic mood, its languor, and the prominence of its — transparent — colour, which was the hallmark of the Pre-Raphaelites:

ANGEL OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

Down through the village street,
Where the slanting sunlight was sweet,
 Swiftly the angel came;
His face like the star of even,
When night is grey in the heaven;
 His hair was a blown gold flame.

His wings were purple of bloom,
And eyed as the peacock's plume;
 They trailed and flamed in the air:
Clear brows with an aureole rimmed,
The gold ring brightened and dimmed,
 Now rose, now fell on his hair.

Oh, the marvellous eyes!
All strange with a rapt surprise,
 They mused and dreamed as he went;
The great lids drooping and white,
Screenèd the glory from sight;
 His lips were innocent.

His clear hand shining withal,
Bore lilies, silver and tall,
 That had grown in the pleasaunce of God;
His robe was fashioned and spun
Of threads from the heart of the sun;
 His feet with white fire were shod.

O friend, with the grave white brow,
No dust of travel hast thou,

 Yet thou hast come from afar,
Beyon the sun and the moon,
Beyon the night and the noon,
 And thy brother the evening star!

He entered in at the gate,
Where the law-breakers sit in their state,
 Where the law-breakers shiver and quake;
The rustling of his long wings,
Like music from gold harp-strings,
 Or songs that the dear birds make.

None saw as he passed their way;
But the children paused in their play,
 And smiled as his feet went by:
A bird sang clear from the nest,
And a babe on its mother's breast
 Stretched hands with an eager cry.

The women stood by the well,
Most grave, and the laughter fell,
 The chatter and gossip grew mute;
They raised their hands to their eyes-
Had the gold sun waxed in the skies;
 Was that the voice of a lute ?

All in the stillness and heat,
The Angel passed through the street,
 Nor pausing nor looking behind
God's finger-touch on his lips;
His great wings fire at the tips;
 His gold hair flame in the wind.

By and large, however, the Rossettian influence on KT's poetry was on the wane, as indeed many reviewers remarked.³⁸ For example, *The*

38. The following apposite reviews of *Shamrocks* can be found in one of KT's book of newspaper cuttings:

[*Truth*, August 12 1889] Miss Tynan is an Irish Jean Ingelow, neither very subtle nor very thoughtful, but, what is perhaps better, fervid and passionately direct.

[*Belfast Morning News*, no date] The present collection of verse is a distinct advance upon "Louise de la Valliere" because it contains more sustained efforts, and more that is of Ireland, while the fealty of Miss Tynan to the lord of Rossettian school of poetic mannerism is not so apparent.

[*Roscommon Herald*, no date] Why Miss Tynan's poetry has been compared to Rossetti's we cannot imagine, and have no sympathy with those writers who "are Latinizing our mother tongue in drawl after drawl of laboured affection." If we were asked for a comparison we might cite Sally Prudhomme as in many ways Miss Tynan's parallel.

[*Unidentified*, no date] To Rossetti, to whom the book is reverently dedicated by the young authoress, we find here and there strong similarity in thought and treatment, but we make bold to say, though Miss Tynan in her present mood will probably regard the saying as profanity, that already the pupil has surpassed her master. The rich word painting is Rossetti's style, and the long smooth swing of the metre and the simile and metaphor poured out in lavish profusion. But Miss Tynan's work has still higher merit and rarer.

[*Irish Times*, no date] The author of *Shamrocks* may also be congratulated on the fact that she no longer be accused of belonging to the Rossetti school. Louise de la Valliere was evidently written by an admirer of Rossetti, but it might with equal truth be said that the Epistle to Earl Stanhope was written in imitation of Pope, or Gebir by an admirer of Milton. Miss Tynan might easily have chosen a worse model when commencing her literary career than Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

[*Westminster*, no date] ... though we are reminded oftener than we could wish of Mr Swinburne, of D.G. Rossetti, and of Mrs Browning, we admit with pleasure that Miss Tynan has made a place for herself as a writer of pleasing and effective verse.

[*Melbourne Australasian*, no date] Her admiration for the writings of the Rossettis is shown, not only in her dedication of her own poems to them, but in the character and structure of some of them; while they also exhibit traces of the influence of Elizabeth Barrett Browning upon her style and metre. In her picture of landscape scenery she occasionally approaches somewhat closely to Tennyson as regards vividness of epithet and felicity of detail.

[*The Lyceum*, Dec. '87] For a *raconteur* who has so pleasingly filled the pause of his time, Mr William Morris speaks of himself somewhat modestly

Spectator, July 30, 1887, observes:

Miss Tynan's first volume of poetry was so steeped in the Rossettian influence, as to reach us a little more than a clear and musical echo. She has now to some considerable extent shaken off the drowsy spell that was upon her. She no longer at any rate consciously, translates her thoughts into the language of Rossetti. Her normal artistic method remains, and will probably always remain, essentially the same.

In Ireland, the Rossettian touches in *Shamrocks* led to the first printed disagreement between Yeats and O'Leary. Yeats reviewed the book for *The Gael*, saying:

Miss Tynan's very highest note is a religious one, as in "the Heart of a Mother" and some few lines in "Death and the Man," and here and there in other places, but besides these dealing with the here and the hereafter there are others of the hereafter and the spiritual world, more exclusively such as "Sanctuary." Poems full of the passionate and sensuous religion of Italy and the South. In caring less for these I do so diffidently, knowing how much in the matter of one of them, I differ thereby from possibly the highest judge of sacred verse now living.³⁹

This "highest judge of sacred verse" was Christina Rossetti. In a letter to Tynan, dated New Year, 1886, she had praised "Sanctuary". In his introductory editorial, O'Leary misquotes Yeats; he writes: "We must, however, mark our dissent ... from 'probably the highest judge of verse

as, "The idle singer of an empty day." But, however inapplicable to the author of *The Earthly Paradise* personally, it is a not unfair description of the school with which he has allied himself. It is the "note" of the school which has produced Rossetti's powerful personality, and which is perhaps oftenest associated with his name. But that school also includes Tennyson and Swinburne, and Meredith, to name a few. They are all idle singers The crying fault of the whole school with which we cannot help associating her, is what we may call, for want of thinking time, the lack of human perspective. Their poems have no *motif*. They are examples of what Mr Ruskin calls the "pathetic fallacy."

[*Providence Sunday Journal*, no date] Miss Tynan's previous work shows a musical gift akin to Swinburne, and an artist's touch akin to Dante Gabriel Rossetti; but her thought is all her own and thoroughly Celtic.

39. W.B. Yeats, "Miss Tynan's New Book", *The Gael*, Spring 1887, in Van de Kamp, 1984, 549.

now living,’ whoever that may be.” He furthermore calls Yeats “the possibly highest judge of sacred verse”. In a letter to Yeats, dubiously dated by Wade “late May 1887”, the Fenian vents his erroneous belief that Yeats had quoted Rossetti as supporting evidence to the excellence of these “poems full of the passionate … religion of Italy”.

Be this as it may, Christina and Gabriel were now becoming subject matter. AE once described KT as “an inveterate gossip”. Reviewing *The Years of the Shadow for the Irish Homestead*, July 19, 1919 (p.535), he sums up her public personality with amiable accuracy:

Katharine Tynan will be remembered for her lyrical poetry, which had at its best a bird-like spontaneity and much beauty of feeling and imagination. But she is also an inveterate gossip She is interested in every person she meets and is never unkind. She has a fairly retentive memory, and where the memory fails she manages with great good humour to fill up the missing links with a passable imitation of what those she met did say or do. Perhaps some of her friends may be a little terrified at the limelight cast on them, but the limelight never plays on anything unpleasant. The inveterate gossip of one generation affords the material for the historian of the next generation.

It seems that Christina was indeed “a little terrified”. She had every right to be. From William, KT had already prised information about Christina’s love affairs. KT knew Christina had refused James Collinson because he was a Catholic, and C. B. Cayley because he was an agnostic. Christina’s love-poems struck KT as far from nun-like. When she was collecting autograph-books for a bazaar, Christina sent her some books from herself but also several volumes by Cayley, making KT wonder whether Christina was stripping herself of precious possessions. The romantic trappings of love were a welcome subject in writings about famous nun-like poetesses.

It is hardly surprising that polite refusals begin to trickle into Christina’s correspondence with KT; she writes in 1889:

30 Torrington Square — London — W.C.
Thursday morning.

Dear Miss Tynan

I have still eyes enough to see a friend, so pray call if you can and kindly will. Nor do I know that there is very much the matter, Laziness being no marvel at 58, and spectacles helping me.

As to the Magazine — no, please, I am out of that groove, and were I in it have more than one prior connexion of the sort.

No fear of my not being in town, as I now never leave home on account of my infirm old Aunts. So do not *hope* to find me gone away if you come!

Very truly yours

Christina G. Rossetti.⁴⁰

This time KT did visit, and wrote in *The Bookman* that she “noticed that the brisk cheerfulness which had disappointed me on my last visit had departed. She was allowing herself to grow old”.⁴¹ This Christina had in fact acknowledged in a letter to KT of the previous year, writing:

Now my juniors may take their turn and write: I do not know that there will be any more books from me, but should on emerge I daresay I shall be at least as gratified as my readers. But advancing age and ailing health tell not a little upon one: it will be a long while before you bow to the first drawback, and may it be at least an equally long while before you falter under the second.

Tho' (as to myself) I am not strong, and I am more than contented not to be strong.⁴²

Five years later, Christina once again politely refuses to be interviewed by KT, who was doing a series for *The Sketch*:

17 Brunswick Road/Brighton/Sept. 14

Dear Mrs. Hinkson

I knew that you are married though not the date, and I have often thought of you, and be sure I wish you and yours fullness of happiness. My brother's address is 3 St. Edmund's Terrace.

Regent's Park - N.W.

in case you should again want it.

40. ALS Christina Rossetti to KT, “30 Torrington Square—London—W.C. Thursday morning”, John Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

41. *The Bookman*, I (1895), 29.

42. Hand-written copy of letter from Christina Rossetti to KT, “30 Torrington Square — London — W.C. April 23. 1888”, in Van de Kamp, 1984, 225.

Do come and see me, — only please do not “interview” me. I own I feel this modern fashion highly distasteful, and am tenacious of my obscurity. Not, of course, that I have ought to say against my friends (and foes: only I trust I have none) writing whatever they please about me, only I cannot lay myself out for the purpose. So far I do carry this that I would very much rather *not* see your article before publication. I am very much an invalid now and expect to remain so permanently, and this seaside holiday was taken for health’s sake. In the course of next week I trust to be at home again, all the better for the change yet not improved beyond a certain point.

Always,

Truly yours

Christina G. Rossetti.⁴³

Perhaps Christina had seen KT’s article, “Another Word about Christina Rossetti”, which appeared in *The Sunday Providence Journal*, for September 1891[?]. In this short piece, KT echoes Gordon Hake’s praise of Christina — she had become acquainted with Dr Hake, and had received insights into Gabriel’s illnesses. She compares Christina favourably to Elizabeth B. Browning, and gives a biographical sketch of C.R., “who after her mother’s death still tends two very old aunts in the heavy old house in Torrington Square”. She notes: “I have always happened to visit her on a wet evening, when mists were falling heavily ...”. She describes Christina’s mother, to whom the daughter dedicated all her books. And she refers to Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s wife:

“Was she so beautiful?” I asked. “Yes,” said Miss Rossetti, “the two brides of one year, she and Mrs. Morris were so beautiful that one could not choose between them.” “Poor Lizzie,” she said, “poor little wife and mother; poor little baby.”

KT paid Christina a visit a few weeks before her death, and noticed nothing of the hysteria that many biographers have commented on. With William KT kept in closer contact. She was to write some six descriptions of the Rossettis’ life and work, always claiming that they expressed Catholic values, calling Christina “*Sancta Christina*” and arguing that Dante was essentially a “failed Catholic”.

43. Letter Christina Rossetti to KT, September 14 1892 ; Carbondale, Special Collections, Morris Library, Katharine Tynan Collection, 55.

What Christina failed to provide Katharine Tynan was the sense of belonging, the confidence of a poetic confidante. This Alice Meynell did provide, and it is in one of KT's verbal portraits of Alice Meynell that she presents her "definitive" views of Christina. In 1915 she concludes:

Mrs Meynell's poetry is, more than any other woman's poetry, fit & exquisite. Hitherto, it must be expressed, the poetry of English-speaking women has been, — not to put too fine a point on it, slovenly. I have presently had occasion to reread, with a view to selection for an anthology the poetry of Christina Rossetti & of Mrs Browning, These two women of genius have been at various times among the biggest stars in the poetic firmament for me. Well, reading them on end, as I was obliged to do, & in a more critical spirit than I had ever brought to them reading before, I was amazed to find how much better the work of these women of genius would have been for compression & pruning in the one case, for a little care in the other.

Mrs Browning & Christina were both women of genius. Mrs Browning's redundancy & carelessness are part of her genius. Only perhaps in the Sonnets was she an artist in the sense of patient craftsmanship. It is hardly conceivable that she corrected what she wrote. Christina is far more of the born artist, but she too was often careless. She rhymes "trus" and "palm-branches" for instance, & this was not a single instance for she has a whole series of rhyme of the same kind which, perhaps someone will tell me are justified by the Italian derivation. I pass by the morbidness, which, when one reads Christina en bloc give a churchyard air to her raptures.⁴⁴

44. The Poetry of Alice Meynell (c. 1912), hand-written MS, Carbondale,
55/2/13.

APPENDIX**Some Memories of Christina Rossetti**

By Katharine Tynan Hinkson

The Outlook, 9 February 1895

It is about nine years ago since I first saw Christina Rossetti, whose passing away has left English poetry so incomparably the poorer. My personal knowledge of her came in this way. In the summer of 1885 I had published my first little volume of verse, "Louise de la Vallière and Other Poems." By far the greater portion of it was written before I had ever read Dante Rossetti's poems. I had looked at them in a library in 1883 or 84 but it was not till April '85, that I possessed a precious volume of them. Well I remember buying it out of a very small allowance — the tremulous eagerness with which I darted into the book-shop and bought it, all in a flurry lest the things more urgently needed should clamour to be heard, and the intense delight with which I carried the volume home, hugging it to my breast. However, my poems were distinctly Rossettian, the critics declared, and one day a friend suggested to me that I should send them to Mr William Rossetti. I was desperately afraid of being a bore, but I sent them nevertheless. A few days later I had a long letter from the distinguished critic, the kindness of which put me into the seventh heaven. I remember how the sense of it hung about me like some delightful essence for days, sleeping and waking, for by this time I was under the spell of the poetry of the Rossettis, and the very name had a magic sound to me. He wrote: "The volume appears to me, on the whole, to be more indicative of an influence from my sister's work than my brother's. I mentioned the book to her yesterday, reading her your letter, and assured her that if she were to receive a copy of the book from you she would heartily like some things in it." Mr Rossetti sent me in the same letter autograph letters of his brother and sister, and also a list of photographs of Dante Rossetti's pictures, from which he asked me to choose any half-dozen as a gift from him, marking those in his opinion the most desirable for possession. I selected "The Girlhood of Mary," "Dante's Dream," "Proserpine," "Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee," the portrait of Mrs Rossetti and Christina, and a head of Rossetti himself. Imagine what this kindness meant to a young person just evolving towards a literary personality, but with as yet no distinctions from her sisters! The photographs hang about me now as I write in a little Middlesex house, far away from the room in the Irish country which they once adorned.

I'm afraid this is very much about myself, and very little about Christina Rossetti. However, encouraged by William Rossetti, I sent her my little book. Her letter is before me as I write in her large, clear, beautiful hand writing.

"Now, having read it," she writes, "I can express my sincere admiration for your poetic gift. But beyond all gifts I account graces, and therefore the piety of your work fills me with hopes far beyond any to be raised by music of diction. If you have honoured my form by thinking it worth imitating, much more may I your spirit. I think you would have been charmed by our dear Gabriel if you had met him: so many were charmed and so many still remember him. I am sending you my last little book, *Time Flies*. I have ventured to write in it your name without the formality of "Miss" — an omission I like towards myself often, so I hope you will not dislike it. —

Numerous other letters passed between us. I have a good many of these letters. Others I have put beyond finding. I was in London the following winter, and visited, by invitation, the Rossettis, brother and sister. Mr Rossetti spent a couple of hours one afternoon exhibiting to me relics of his brother, and talking to me about him.

It was a dark January evening when I went to Torrington Square — so long honored by the presence of Christina Rossetti. The "square" is a long oval, very quiet though it is within a stone's throw of Tottenham Court Road. It is in the melancholy Bloomsbury district, and whenever I was there I thought the little Square gloomy, with its solid Georgian houses and the sooty London sparrows chattering on the smoke-stained trees inside the inclosure. No. 30, where Miss Rossetti lived, struck me, when I went in, by its strange quietness: it was a heavy, muffled silence which seemed to me afterwards to be part of the atmosphere of the very old people who lived there — Mrs Rossetti, then aged eighty-seven, and her sisters, the Misses Polidori. Miss Rossetti lived for years in the most loving service to them, and but seldom went out. It was a saddening life, however sweetened by love and duty.

When I went into the room where Miss Rossetti was, she came to meet me, and after a cordial greeting, led me up to her mother, who sat in a big armchair by the chimney-corner, very bent, but regarding us out of bright, alert eyes, full of interest. She had still the noble beauty, undimmed, which we see in her son's portraits of her. I remembered how he wrote to her from Kelmscott — "I have often thought of you since we last met; always whenever my path in the garden lies by the window of that summer room at which I used to see your dear beautiful face last summer." Miss Rossetti at the time had a brisk and cheerful manner, which rather disappointed me because it was so unlike her poems. She trotted about busily and looked strong, though her face had the colorlessness of one who lives much indoors. I must have said to her that she was unlike what I had expected, because she said: "I was a very melancholy and mopy girl, but I am a genuinely cheerful old woman." She made me talk that evening of my own affairs and thoughts — very much of my feeling for the beloved Gabriel. All the time she sat close to her mother, whose delicate old hand rested on the arm of the chair, and now and again patted her daughter's. Mrs Rosetti listened with alert interest to my enthusiastic talk, and, if she failed to catch anything, leaned to Christina to

hear it repeated. After a time she grew tired, and Miss Rossetti led her away, asking me to stay till she came back. When she returned she lit the candles, for the room was by this time full of the dusk, and showed me some of Gabriel's pictures which were about the room. I remember a pencil-sketch of his young wife, asleep in an armchair. "Poor little Lizzie!" sighed Miss Rossetti; "I think she would have lived if her little baby had lived."

She lent me that evening, or some other, her own copy of "Cranford," in the original brown cloth, and inscribed, "Christina Rossetti, from her affectionate uncle, G. Polidori." She apologized for not giving me the book, mentioning that it was a gift from a relative. She envied my not having read "Cranford," and sat with the book on her lap. Opening it here and there, and laughing to herself over favorite bits. I remember the great, heavy lids which gave such a look of spirituality to the face. She did not look then, or at any later time to me, as I have seen her looking in a photograph much printed since her death — old and relaxed, telescoped, as it were, into herself. She held herself quite upright and dignified; and the photographer must have found her some time when she was feeling old and weak.

"That sad story of an umbrella! I fear the trouble it occasioned you outweighed its merits. And all the time I had a second, too big for elegance, but by no means too big for utility. I hope "Cranford" is making amends for all misdeeds of myself and my umbrella."

The next time I saw Miss Rossetti was a wet September day of 1889. During those years of absence from London her strongest link with earth, her mother's life, had snapped. She was still, however, bright and cheerful, having still her two old aunts to encircle with love and service to their grave. I had meanwhile dedicated a book, "Shamrocks," to her and her brother. My own copy of that book, with her precious letter of thanks for the dedication inserted in it, was, alas! borrowed with a promise of being most sacredly taken care of, and was never returned to me. I remember a phrase of hers in it: "I am not sure that I have one drop of Irish blood in my veins, but if I have it is a very warm one." I remember that she talked of the poetry of other women that evening, and praised Mrs Piatt's; she also spoke of Mrs Meynell's poetry with admiration, saying that Gabriel had liked it greatly. She told me Americans often called to see her, and said, very simply that a good many of her books were sold in America, and that in Messrs Roberts, of Boston, she had found most kind and considerate publishers. She had written to me in the preceding year of failing health: "Now my juniors may take their turn and write. I do not know that there will be any more books from me, but should one emerge I dare say I shall be at least as gratified as my readers. But advancing age and failing health tell upon one: it will be a long while before you bow down to the first drawback, and may it be at least an equally long while before you falter under the second. Though (as to myself) I am not strong, and I am more contented not to be strong."

In the summer of '92 Miss Rossetti had her first serious illness. I asked her in the following autumn for an autograph book, to be given as a prize at a bazaar in aid of aged and infirm school-teachers (I think) at Boston, in which a friend of mine was playing a leading part. She assented gladly, and sent us her "Poems" inscribed, and also a parcel of other books, which she asked me to send if I thought they would serve for the use of the bazaar.

I saw her only once again, in the autumn of '93. She had become a confirmed invalid by that time, and was only waiting the summons to depart. The house was brighter and airier than I had ever seen it, and it was a brisk, beautiful day. Miss Rossetti lay on a sofa and sat up to receive me when I came in, only reclining again at my earnest request. I had been asked to write something about her, and she was willing, for my sake, to help me. "Now ask me whatever you want to know," she said. But, divining in her a reluctance to be written about, I impulsively burst out with an assurance that I would write nothing if she did not really like it. She looked relieved. "Thank you," she said; "that is kind. Now we can talk easily, and I shall not feel as if I were sitting to be photographed." I had then half an hour's quiet conversation with her. I remember being struck by how little she knew of London in which she had lived all her life. "Ealing?" she said, when I told her where my house was. "Is it Hammersmith way?" And I found that she had the vague idea of localities in this overgrown metropolis. She had lived a life like a nun — nay, more cloistered than many a nun. I asked her if she had not found it hard to live in London. "I have missed the flowers," she said. Once or twice in these latter years I had letters from her from Torquay, where she sometimes went to gather strength. The poor have lost a great friend, for the proceeds of her work went in her secret charities.

As she was saying "good-bye" to me, she added, "Write what you will of me when I am gone." I have regarded her feeling, and tried to write only what I feel I may. I look at her letters now, and her inscriptions in these books to me, as one might look at the holy hand of a saint and martyr in a reliquary. Well was she named after the Lord himself, she who is now part of the Vision she was inspired to behold.

Multitudes, multitudes, stood up in bliss,
Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair;
With harps, palms, wedding-garments, kiss of peace,
And crowned and haloed hair.

They sung a song, a new song in the height,
Harping with harps to Him who is Strong and True;
They drank new wine, their eyes saw with new light,
Lo, all things were made new.

Tier beyond tier they rose and rose and rose
So high that it was dreadful, flames with flames;
No man could number them, no tongue disclose

Their secret, sacred names.

As though one pulse stirred all, one rush of blood
 Fed all, one breath swept through them myriad-voiced,
 They struck their harps, cast down their crowns, they stood
 And worshiped and rejoiced.

Each face looked one way like a morn new-lit,
 Each face looked one way towards the Sun of Love;
 Drank love and bathed in love and mirrored it,
 And knew no end thereof.

SANTA CHRISTINA

By Katharine Tynan

The Bookman, January 1912

My first acquaintance with Christina Rossetti came about in 1885, after I had published my first volume of poems, *Louise de la Vallière*, I did not send it to the great, indiscriminatingly, as the young poets of those days were wont to do; but because I was Rossetti-mad at the time, because the little book was very Rossettian — a good deal of it had been written, nevertheless, before I had read Dante Gabriel — I sent it to William Michael Rossetti. I may recall that the first Rossetti book I ever owned—number one of the two famous volumes published by Ellis and Elvey, with the Rossetti design on the cover [presumably the 1882 edn] — was purchased with the 10s. 6d. which *the Graphic* had paid me for a poem: and well I remember buying it in the Dublin book-shop and carrying it home hugged against my heart, the colour and glory of it irradiating my day. Rossetti had succeeded Mrs Browning with me. There was a time when I used to repeat “The Brown Rosary” as I raced along the country roads, running from exhilaration in the poetry and my youth, till the sight of a gaping urchin shocked me into decorum. But “The Brown Rosary” and “The Sonnets from the Portuguese” had been replaced by “The Blessed Damozel” and “The Staff and Scrip”, before ever *Louise de la Vallière* saw the light! Those were days when I had a great deal of Dante Gabriel by heart and used to say him over to myself by day and by night.

The little book was an arrow shot in the dark. Picture then the incredulous delight of the rustic maiden when an early post brought a long letter from Mr William Rossetti, full of praise of the book, and inviting her to select from a list of the Hollyer photographs of Rossetti’s pictures any half-dozen! I thought, and I still think it, royal kindness — gold for bronze indeed. The letter came on a summer Sunday morning, and I can yet recall the joy of my heart as I read it aloud to the father who shared all my joys.

The letter contained a suggestion that I should send the book to Christina, who had read my letter to her brother and had been greatly interested. I suppose they were amused and pleased at my frank Rossetti adoration. It was indeed a name of enchantment to me in those days. I sent the book with a heart and a half, and a few days later brought me a most kind and warm letter from Christina, with the photographs of the pictures which still are among my cherished possessions.

The remainder of that summer and the autumn were marked by white-stone days on which I received letters from either William or Christina Rossetti. I used to send them all I wrote, and they never failed in kindest acknowledgment. I realize now that my youthful enthusiasm might well have been a bore; but if these kind people, who to me were up in the skies above me — as indeed Christina was — touched with even more than the enchantment which hung for me then over all people of literary achievement, felt it so at any time, they never betrayed it by a sign. I used to wait for their letters, turning cold with apprehension if they were delayed—having a correspondingly warm rush of joy when the envelopes with William Michael's beautiful little calligraphy or Christina's large clear hand, were in my post-bag some happy morning. I have a good many letters of Christina's of that date, but they are not at this moment accessible, and I think they were chiefly concerned with the poems I sent her. "More than *gifts* I value *graces*," she wrote to me once, in praise of a poem of mine: and I think she liked me because of religious poems.

Sometime in that winter I was in London, and was bidden to William Rossetti's house in Euston Square — Endsleigh Gardens, rather — and to 30, Torrington Square, Christina's unlikely home for so many years.

I paid Christina several visits that winter, and I daresay they may have been visitations, but I'm sure if they were so that I must have been pressed to remain. The Rossettis were always true Bloomsbury people. Torrington Square was near William Rossetti; and the family ties with Christina were close and dear. It was near her favourite church. It was convenient for the many people who came to see her. She told me that she had crowds of American visitors, and she did not deny herself to them. I must, I think, have visited Christina in summer later on: but I have no memory of it. My memory is always of dark and wet winter evenings: of the little oblong London square, the lamp-light shining on its dripping evergreens; of the darkness of the little house to which I was admitted where Santa Christina shone like a light. The last time I saw her, within the weeks immediately preceding her death, she lay on a sofa, the light burning brighter and brighter as the frail vessel that held it grew more and more transparent.

That first afternoon we sat in the dusk, I, at one side of the fire-place, facing the great old mother of the Rossettis, who was then in her eighties. There was still living in the house an old Miss Polidori, or perhaps two. I seem to remember Christina taking one, or perhaps two, to Torquay, where

she always made her infrequent holidays. The room was very dim. I do not think there was bright firelight. But as time went Christina lit a couple of candles. I remember the grave, noble face watching me with great interest and kindness. My adoration for Dante Rossetti had pleased and touched them I exuded it. In those days my grief was that I could not have won one word of his approval. Sometimes Mrs Rossetti bent to ask Christina what I had said; and when it was conveyed to her, the steadfast, fine old face turned on me its look of pleased approval. Once Christina said something about her mother, who leant forward and patted her knee, murmuring, "My affectionate Christina."

I remember that it was something of a shock; to me to receive at my first sight of Christina an impression of short-petticoated sturdiness. She was not in the least bit sturdy. Probably she would have loved the trailing Pre-Raphaelite garments which just then were all the vogue; the beautiful colours to which Liberty's were just introducing us. Doubtless it was a mortification of the flesh or the spirit to wear, as she did, thick boots and short rough grey skirts. As far as they could they made her almost ugly, for the spiritual face, with the heavily-lidded eyes, had nothing to do with those garments fit for a ten-mile walk over ploughed fields. She had scruples about the sadness of her poetry. "I was a melancholy girl," she said, "so I am a very cheerful old lady." She was not an old lady, but she had chosen, so far as she could, to be Victorian middle-aged. Something of a death-in-life it seemed to the girl coming in from outside, to be shut up in an ill-lit house in Torrington Square, with two or three old ladies getting up to their centuries. One wondered that she did not make it more tolerable by living in the country. But she chose Torrington Square. I wonder if she hated it as much as she ought to have hated it.

I had come fresh from William Rossetti's house where I had handled — as though it were the Grail—the Germ, and had inspected all manner of relics of Dante Gabriel. I had been given a short note of his, asking if Mrs Stillman had come to town, an immemorable thing, but memorable to the disciple; also a characteristic note of Christina's: "My dear William, I will come on Thursday, so far as human prevision can ensure it," an escape from the hackneyed "D.V." Christina too took down from walls and out of desks all sorts of pictures and sketches of "Dear Gabriel," and "Poor little Lizzie." We talked about Christina's poetry. I wish I remember more clearly what was said. One poem we discussed was "Milly, a Lady." Is that the title I wonder? My books are out of reach and I cannot be sure. But I remember the verse I quoted. And now I think that must have been why Mrs Rossetti, the other side of the fire murmured, "My affectionate Christina."

"Milly has no mother; and sad beyond another
Is she whose blessed mother is vanished out of call.
Surely sweetness is wrapped up in a mother.
Who bears with all, and trusts through all, and loves us all."

"Ah," said Christina, "I remember how Gabriel said when I read it to him: 'You've been reading "Lady Geraldine's Courtship."'" "And I had," she added.

I don't know if it was then or at some other time that she told me she never stepped on a scrap of torn paper, but lifted it out of the mud lest perhaps it should have the Holy Name written or printed upon it.

I went away that evening loaded with books, her own — she gave me at one time or another all she had written — her books as well. It was she who introduced me to "Cranford." I carried off , what was probably a first edition, with a Polidori name written in it. She laughed a great deal over "Cranford," turning the pages and recalling this or that. I think I went away uneasy because of her pretence of robustness, of brusquerie, almost.

Then on some other wet winter evening I carried off her umbrella. I had some considerable difficulty in restoring it, for though I set out several times with that object I did not succeed in achieving it till the eve of my leaving London, and then, I think, I took three hansom, before I finally reached Torrington Square. I forget what my adventures were, but I know she was greatly diverted by my recital of them. "That sad tale of an umbrella!" she wrote afterwards: "and all the time I had another, quite serviceable." The one I had taken was, by the way, quite gampish. It belonged to that period when she was determined to be Victorian middle-aged, she the "undaunted daughter of desires!"

"I am not sure that I have one drop of Irish blood in me," she wrote once, "but if there is a drop, it is a very warm one."

Once — it was in the day of the interview — I sought to interview her. She would not be interviewed, or rather she put it in this way: "Would I come to see her and ask what I liked, only remembering that she had a dislike to being interviewed for the Press." This naturally had a very deterrent effect. I went and saw her; but no interview was written.

I certainly saw her on her sofa in her last illness. My impression is that I called to inquire, not intending nor hoping to see her, but that my name being taken up to her she wished to see me. Anyhow I was with her for a few moments, a farewell visit it proved. I think as she lay there, so gentle and patient, holding my hand, that she was really panting for Heaven. No one could grudge her her happy release; her happy ending that only the prelude to the happiest beginning, although London, which must have many saints behind its dark house-fronts, had a saint the less.

"Tis, O, in Paradise I fain would be.

All her poetry rings with the cry. Her vision of Paradise was very dear.

[Quotes the "Multitudes, multitudes" poem]

The intensity of this realization of the Beatific Vision must have irradiated her life, wherever it was spent, with a glory beyond telling. Perhaps that was why Torrington Square held her as contentedly as the lovely country where she might have dwelt if she had chosen.

All the world that cares to know knows that Christina might have married two or three times. Her last vision of earthly happiness, foregone by her because her could not accept what to her was life and breath, was afforded her by the love of the Cayley who translated Petrarch. She was very hard on her lover and herself, but she never repented the hardness I think, in her later judgment, though a less greatly-loving woman might have found justification for being happy in certain texts of St. Paul. It is this latest of her lovers whom she bade to many a passionate tryst when her heart spoke in the abandonment of her poetry:

Shall I forget on this side of the grave?
 I promise nothing: you must wait and see—
 Patient and brave,
 (Oh my soul watch with him and he with me.)

Shall I forget in peace of Paradise?
 I promise nothing: follow, friend, and see—
 Faithful and wise.
 (Oh my soul, keep the way he walks with me.)

I think in spite of the human passion which beats through much of her poetry she was of the women who are called to be Brides of Christ, own sister to St. Teresa and St. Catharine of Siena. Perhaps it was part of the whole woman she was, that she laid such passionate hold on the human love and relinquished it with such pangs and tears.

[Quotes “Oh dream, how sweet”]

She was not Italian for nothing.

What on earth had she to do, this flame-hearted saint, with the grey streets of London, above all with Bloomsbury, more than all with the Mid-Victorian and Early-Victorian woman she tried to look like? There was nothing at all of England in her way of loving, the mortal love or the Divine love. She might have been one of those Italian nuns of whom Mrs Humphry Ward says that, deprived of their daily Communion, they faint and wither. She was a born mystic. England had no part in her; but England is immeasurably the gainer for that revolutionary bee in the bonnet which drove Gabriele Rossetti out of Italy and into England. Christina belonged to the Church of England by a strange accident. I am far from saying that her poetry did not gain much from her being brought up on the English Bible.

Perhaps if it had not been for the accident her poetry would have gained in another respect. She might have been free of that love of dwelling on the material aspect of death, which gives a certain sickly hue to this radiant creature's else rapturous poetry. Someone said of Christina's early poems that she could never keep the worms out of them. Well, perhaps that was partly the English Bible. But I imagine it may also have been Torrington Square. Be that as it may, the fact remains that Christina Rossetti stands head and shoulders above all other women who have written English poetry. Where she stands in the line of poets, men as well as women, time will prove, and the judgment that sits in judgment, sifting, apportioning for immortality, beyond the futilities of contemporary judgment, blown about by many winds. If one may venture an opinion, among the Victorian poets, she and Browning will take the first place. Mystic and vestal virgin as she was, she was so much woman that the love she had refused and set on one side, preferring a heavenly love to an earthly, was her inspiration scarcely less than the heavenly. It inspired the "Monna Innominata," the noblest series of sonnets given to the world by a woman.

Another reminiscence and I am done. Some time in the early 'nineties my assistance was asked in collecting autographed books by famous English writers for the book-stall at an American bazaar. I was more adventurous then than I am now, and my cheerful confidence was well repaid. The great were all or nearly all propitious. Christina, with characteristic generosity, sent me all her own books, and two or three volumes by Mr Cayley. So that she had not lost spiritual touch with him even then. Some of the books were late for the bazaar and came back, among them these volumes by Christina's life-long lover, which are still in my possession.

Some time in the 'eighties I made the acquaintance of a little lady of very tender age, who was Christina's godchild and the happy possessor of Christina's coral and Christina's baby string of beads. I envied that little lady. I envy her now. Christina's necklace, well, who knows what ills Christina's necklace might charm away, how potent her coral might be against evil enchantments? She would perhaps have been shocked at the suggestion. Her poetry tells us that she regarded herself as a sinner. Yet surely no one in our time was more of the stuff of saints, fitter for the Kingdom, than crowned and haloed and palm-branched Santa Christina.

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WALTER PATER'S VERSATILITY AS A CRITIC

BILLIE ANDREW INMAN

Walter Pater presented himself to the reading public as an aesthetic critic in 1873, in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. My purpose here is, first, to examine what Pater meant by *aesthetic criticism* at that time and how his concept of this mode of criticism changed later; and, second, to point out that although he practised aesthetic criticism intermittently throughout his career, he defined and practised four other modes of criticism as well. To appreciate Pater's significance as a critic it is necessary to observe his versatility and the interplay of critical modes in his late works.

The aesthetic critic as described in the "Preface" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* is a perceiver of art, not a producer or one who claims to know how to produce the art works that he perceives. Pater states that in order to be an aesthetic critic one needs, not an "abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved in the presence of beautiful objects".¹ He does not simplistically explain the process by which the aesthetic critic operates, but a process can be discerned by the attentive reader. The first step in this mode of criticism is to view a painting or sculpture or read a piece of literature, or even look upon a scene in life, not as a critic, but as a lover, one who yields to the charm of the object. Sainte-Beuve, one of Pater's exemplars, refers to such lovers of art in a review of the *Oeuvres fran ois de Joachim du Bellay*, calling them "refined amateurs"

1. "Preface", *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, London, 1873, x; hereafter referred to as *StRen*. Pater was probably influenced by J. J. Winckelmann. In *Abhandlung von der Fahigkeit der Empfindung des Schonen in der Kunst und dem Unterricht in derselben* ("A Treatise on the Capacity of Perceiving Beauty in Art and Teaching It"), which Pater borrowed from the Taylor Institution Library in the spring of 1866, Winckelmann expresses the idea that some people are gifted with a capacity for perceiving beauty greater than other people can imagine. He believed that this gift could be cultivated by appropriate education, but could not be nullified by inappropriate education (in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Walther Rehm, Berlin, 1968, 213).

or “complete humanists”, like a friend of Racine or Fénelon, a M. de Tréville or a M. de Valincour, who, Sainte-Beuve says, were honest men who did not intend to be authors, but “limited themselves to reading, to knowing beautiful things at first hand, and nourishing themselves on beautiful things”.² Calling it a rule for those who wish to achieve the goal of the aesthetic critic, Pater quotes most of Sainte-Beuve’s statement, although he attributes it incorrectly to a critic of Sainte-Beuve: “De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s’en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis” (*StRen*, ix).

If the reader has become really captivated by the artist or author and has been nourished by the beauty in the artistic or literary creation, then he can become a critic by analysing his empathetic response to the work.³ He is able, to quote Pater, “to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced” (*StRen*, ix). Thus Pater’s aesthetic critic is not an impressionistic critic, if being such means seeing from a peculiar, private angle of vision, nor a practitioner of the type of “highest Criticism” that Oscar Wilde, in “The Critic as Artist”, judged Pater to be, one who does not care what the work of art is if it stirs a strain of creativity in him,⁴ but an empathetic critic. Affinities to powers in the mind of the artist draw him to the artist’s work; he gives himself up to the power of the work, recreating it in his own subjective mind through identification with it, thus seeing “the object as in itself it really is” (*StRen*, viii).⁵ His function, finally, is to explain to others the formula of

2. Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, “*Oeuvres françoises de Joachim du Bellay*, avec une notice biographique et des notes par M. Ch. Marty-Laveaux”, in *Le Constitutionnel*, April, June, August 1867; rptd in *Nouveaux Lundis*, in 3 parts, Paris, 1864-70, XIII (1870), pt. 2, 297. Sainte-Beuve’s text is as follows: “se bornaient à lire, à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s’en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.”

3. Pater had probably been influenced by Goethe, who states: “If you read a book and let it work upon you, and yield yourself up entirely to its influence, then, and only then, will you arrive at a correct judgment of it”; “On Criticism, 1821-24”, in *Goethe’s Literary Essays*, ed. and trans. J.E. Spingarn, New York, 1921, 141.

4. Oscar Wilde, “The Critic as Artist”, *Intentions*, in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann, New York, 1968, 366-69.

5. Matthew Arnold had stated in *On Translating Homer* (1861), Lecture II, last paragraph: “Of these two literatures [French and German], as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a *critical* effort; the

beauty that accounts for the peculiar pleasure imparted by the works of the author or artist who has pleased him.

Pater applied this approach several times before he defined it. Of course, his performance as a critic even in this early stage was more complicated than his definition of *aesthetic criticism* suggests, since he had read and assimilated pertinent biographical and critical material on all of his subjects before he began to write,⁶ but he does unify his early Renaissance essays, 1869-1872, by explaining the source of the subject's power to attract and delight: namely, Leonardo da Vinci's mysterious insight into the processes of nature generated by his curiosity and desire of beauty; Sandro Botticelli's infusion of his subjects with "a sense of displacement or loss ... the wistfulness of exiles", who belong to "that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals";⁷ Pico della Mirandula's aspiration to reconcile pagan and Christian ideas, the aspiration of "a true humanist";⁸ Michelangelo's unique blend of Medieval strength and Classical sweetness; the perfect manner of the poetry of the *Pleiad* — "not vigorous or original, but full of the grace that comes of long study and reiterated refinements".⁹

endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science — to see the object as in itself it really is"; *On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R.H. Super, Ann Arbor: Mich., 1960, 140. Arnold repeated this statement, with slight revisions, in the first paragraph of "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864); see *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, ed. R.H. Super, Ann Arbor: Mich., 1962, 258. Pater endorses Arnold's aim, but proposes a new method of reaching it, following Hegel in maintaining that the route to objectivity is empathy. In his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, borrowed by Pater from the Queen's College Library, April 1863, Hegel states: "... the artist's production is at the same time [as it is a true rendering of the subject in its essential characteristics] the work of *his* inspiration; it is he alone who has, by his entire identification of his personality with the specific subject-matter and its artistic embodiment, brought into being the entire creation out of the life of his *own* emotional nature and imagination"; *Werke*, 18 vols in 20, Berlin, 1832-40, X, trans. F.P.B. Osmaston, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, 4 vols, London, 1920, I, 394-95.

6. See my *Walter Pater's Reading: a Bibliography of His Library Borrowings and Literary References, 1858-1873*, New York, 1981, and "The Intellectual Context of Walter Pater's 'Conclusion'", *Prose Studies*, IV/1 (May 1981), 12-30.

7. "Sandro Botticelli", *StRen*, 44-45.

8. "Pico della Mirandula", *StRen*, 38.

9. "Joachim du Bellay", *StRen*, 139.

In two essays that he must have composed about the same time as the "Preface", "Luca della Robbia" and "Wordsworth", Pater applies the method of the aesthetic critic, but in each he also anticipates a later direction in his criticism. He finds Luca della Robbia's formula of beauty to lie in the "intense and individualised expression" — "the impress of a personal quality, a profound expressiveness, what the French call *intimité*".¹⁰ Here he anticipates the assumption underlying much of his later criticism: "le style est l'homme même", first stated by Buffon in the discourse he delivered to the French Academy on the day of his reception into the Academy in 1775.¹¹ In regard to Wordsworth, he explains in the "Preface" that "the *virtue*, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry" is "that strange mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and colour and character from local influences, from the hills and streams and natural sights and sounds" (*StRen*, xi). However, he also introduces in the "Preface" the idea, which he was to develop in his essay on Wordsworth published shortly after *The Renaissance*, that it is only when "the heat of his genius" fuses form and matter that Wordsworth's poetry achieves this *virtue* (*StRen*, x). He states, in "On Wordsworth": "In him, when the really poetical motive worked at all, it united with absolute justice the word and the idea, each in the imaginative flame becoming inseparably one with the other, by that fusion of matter and form which is the characteristic of the highest poetical expression."¹² As always with Pater, the specific insight derived from the study of a specific author precedes the general statement of theory: the theory to cover this particular insight in regard to Wordsworth would not be stated until three years later, in "The School of Giorgione".

There is a missing link, however, in Pater's theory of aesthetic criticism as expressed in the "Preface", which can easily be sensed when considering Pater's own performance in an essay like "Wordsworth". What seems to be an almost divinatory power of insight into the writer's mind and empathy with the writer's feelings and ideas does not come only from loving, feeling deeply, and appreciating, but also from a subtle understanding of the intricacies of language, style, and other aspects of expression and a marvellous mastery over language, style, and other aspects of expression. Pater's theory of aesthetic criticism in the "Preface"

10. "Luca della Robbia", *StRen*, 58, 60-61.

11. Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, "Discours prononcé à l'académie françoise le jour de sa réception", in *Oeuvres philosophiques de Buffon*, text established and introd. by Jean Piveteau, Paris, 1954, 503b.

12. "On Wordsworth", *Fortnightly Review*, 21 (April 1874), 463.

does not rule out the critic's having such understanding and mastery, but it does not specify that they are necessary.

The subject that Pater chose to write about immediately after enunciating his theory of aesthetic criticism in the "Preface" and practising this type of criticism brilliantly in "Wordsworth", was one of Shakespeare's plays that he did not think to be as artistic as some of Shakespeare's other plays, *Measure for Measure*. He states in this regard in "A Fragment on *Measure for Measure*" (1874): "In *Measure for Measure*, as in some other of his plays, Shakspere has remodelled an earlier and somewhat rough composition to 'finer issues', suffering much to remain as the less skilful hand had left it, and not raising the whole of his work to an equal degree of intensity."¹³ Pater is not approaching this play as an aesthetic critic intent upon explaining the peculiar pleasure that it gives a reader. He is interested in the matter of the play, which has not been so much refined by art that its stark verisimilitude has been dissipated. It has "the true seal of experience" upon it, is "like a fragment of life itself".¹⁴ Here Pater is a mimetic critic, reading the play for its reflection of real life, where people must make moral choices and pass moral judgments. He is concerned about "the difficulty of seizing the true relations of so complex a material, the difficulty of just judgment, of judgment that shall not be unjust".¹⁵ Never before nor after this essay did Pater use mimesis without combining it with some other approach. One may wonder, then, whether Pater was guided in his choice of subject by the fact that moral judgments had been passed upon him a few months earlier by Benjamin Jowett and some other Oxford men, and perhaps even his own sisters, because of his homoerotic involvement with an undergraduate, William Money Hardinge.¹⁶

When Pater takes up the term *aesthetic criticism* again, in "The School of Giorgione", he revises its meaning significantly. First, he focuses attention upon the media of the various arts: marble, paint, words, musical tones, as he had not done in the "Preface"; and he no longer includes impressions from life as well as art in his discussion, as he had done in the

13. "A Fragment on *Measure for Measure*", *Fortnightly Review*, 22 (November 1874), 652.

14. *Ibid.*, 652.

15. *Ibid.*, 658.

16. For a description of this incident in Pater's life, see my "Estrangement and Connection: Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett, and William M. Hardinge", in *Pater in the 1990s*, eds Laurel Brake and Ian Small, Greensboro: NC, 1991, 1-20.

“Preface”. Notice the new context in which Pater places the term *aesthetic criticism*:

In this way [the way of popular critics, who assume that a “quantity of imaginative thought” exists separate from a medium of expression and can be expressed in any medium], the sensuous element in art, and with it almost everything in art that is essentially artistic, is made a matter of indifference; and a clear apprehension of the opposite principle — that the sensuous material of each art brings with it a special phase or quality of beauty, untranslateable into the forms of any other, an order of impressions distinct in kind, is the beginning of all true aesthetic criticism.¹⁷

The aesthetic critic is not now just a perceiver interested only in the effects of the finished product, but also a student of art interested in the modes of its production. Although important, this idea about the essential differences in the media of the arts is in the context of this essay just a concession. Pater proceeds to say that artists strive to minimize these differences, with each art lending the other “new forces” (“Giorgione”, 527).¹⁸ And then he makes a leap that gives him a standard by which to judge excellence in art. He uses music as a metaphor for the perfect blending of form and matter, whatever the art form. In his famous statement *All art constantly aspires to the condition of music* (“Giorgione”, 528) he lays down a standard for judging, not the total value indeed, but the artistic excellence of art, and in so doing contradicts the principle enunciated in the “Preface” that the aesthetic critic begins with the work to be appreciated, not with a standard.

When he discusses the application of this standard, in “The School of Giorgione”, without of course mentioning that he had already applied it in judging some of Wordsworth’s poems to be less artistic than others and *Measure for Measure* to be less artistic than some of Shakespeare’s other plays, he states that “ideal” art will not let its matter dominate; matter

17. “The School of Giorgione”, *Fortnightly Review*, 28 (October 1877), 526; hereafter referred to as “Giorgione”.

18. Germain d’Hagेन notes in *Walter Pater: l’homme et l’œuvre*, 2 vols, Paris, 1961, I, 349, n.8, that Pater’s “the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces” is a translation of Baudelaire’s “sinon à se suppléer l’un l’autre, du moins à se prêter réciproquement des forces nouvelles”, from “L’Oeuvre et la vie d’Eugène Delacroix” (1863), in *L’Art romantique* (1868); see volume III of *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, Paris, 1925, 5. For commentary on this matter, see *The Renaissance*, ed. Donald L. Hill. Berkeley: Calif., 1980, 388.

must be so tightly unified with form that the two strike the “imaginative reason” as one and thereby create beauty (“Giorgione”, 530). Only music can achieve the ideal of art, because only in music can matter not be distinguished from form; but the lyric poem can come close to the ideal and is therefore potentially the most artistic form of poetry (“Giorgione”, 529). It is important to note that “ideal” art in “The School of Giorgione” is the equivalent of “art for art’s sake” in “Poems by William Morris” (1868), later called “Aesthetic Poetry”. Notice that the type of poetry that is acknowledged in the following quotation from “The School of Giorgione” lies outside art for art’s sake because of moral and political significance and is not ideal art because its matter cannot be dominated by form:

Sometimes it [poetry] may find a noble and quite legitimate function in the expression of moral or political aspiration, as often in the poetry of Victor Hugo.¹⁹ In such instances it is easy enough for the understanding to distinguish between the matter and the form, howevermuch the matter, the subject, the element which is addressed to mere intelligence, has been penetrated by the informing, artistic spirit (“Giorgione”, 529).

Pater, in “The School of Giorgione”, is explaining primarily the appeal of the opposite type of art, “ideal art” or “art for art’s sake”, in which “the form, … this mode of handling” becomes “an end in itself” (“Giorgione”, 528), creating moments of supreme satisfaction when the problems of the world have vanished and the mind is filled with a beautiful image, for example, “the portrait of just that one spray of leaves lifted just so high against the sky, above the well” (“Giorgione”, 536) or the images suggested by Giorgione of “men fainting at music, music heard at the pool-side while people fish, or mingled with the sound of the pitcher in the well, or heard across running water, or among the flocks; the tuning of instruments; people with intent faces as if listening ...” (*ibid.*).

However, in Pater’s thinking, as in Hegel’s, there were realms of knowledge and realms of spirit that could not be represented by “ideal” art, or art in which form dominates matter, art for art’s sake. He was serious in saying that poetry might “find a noble and quite legitimate function in the expression of moral or political aspiration.” Further, in

19. Swinburne made a similar statement in his review of Victor Hugo’s *L’Année terrible*: “We admit then that the worth of a poem has properly nothing to do with its moral meaning or design … but on the other hand we refuse to admit that art of the highest kind may not ally itself with moral or religious passion, with the ethics or the politics of a nation or an age”; *Fortnightly Review*, 18 (September 1872), 258.

Marius the Epicurean, Pater was to acknowledge that artistic mode of handling as an end in itself could keep bad company. He points out that extreme care in handling could be lavished upon “the flowering and folding of a toga” that might cover a “wholly animal” human being like Lucius Verus;²⁰ and in *Gaston de Latour*, he refers to “‘flowers of evil’ ... among the rest”,²¹ and describes the Valois during the time of the Saint Bartholomew Massacre “moving to the sounds of wedding music, through a world of dainty gestures, amid sonnets and flowers, and perhaps the most refined art the world has seen, to their surfeit of blood”.²²

Pater did not compose a series of essays to illustrate his revised conception of aesthetic criticism any more than he composed a series of essays to illustrate his description of aesthetic criticism in the “Preface”. In 1878, the year after he had published “The School of Giorgione”, his career took a decided turn in another direction: he published his first piece of fiction, an imaginary portrait, “The Child in the House”. In accord with this new direction in his own writing, he began to look for self-portraiture in the works of others, as one can see in reading his essay on Charles Lamb, published in 1878. Pater had always related facts and anecdotes from the lives of the artists and authors who had been subjects of his essays, and he continued to do so; but at this time he began also to coordinate attributes of the mind of the creative artist with characteristics in his works. Another way to explain his procedure is to say that he selected authors who lent themselves to the expressive mode of criticism — Lamb, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Sir Thomas Browne, although he also applied the method to Shakespeare.

In “The Character of the Humourist. Charles Lamb”, Pater states: “... with him, as with Montaigne, the desire of self-portraiture is, below all more superficial tendencies, the real motive in writing at all, — a desire closely connected with the intimacy, that modern subjectivity, which may be called the *Montaignesque* element in literature. What he designs is to give you himself, to acquaint you with his likeness ...”.²³ In “Love’s Labours Lost”, written by 1878 although not published until 1885, Pater finds Shakespeare to be a self-conscious self-portrayer, not only reflecting a facet of his own attitude, but also judging that attitude with ironic

20. *Marius the Epicurean*, 2 vols, London, 1885, I, 212.

21. *Gaston de Latour: An Unfinished Romance*, prepared for the press by Charles L. Shadwell, London, 1896, 89.

22. *Ibid.*, 149.

23. “The Character of the Humourist. Charles Lamb”, *Fortnightly Review*, 30 (October 1878), 471-72.

amusement. Biron is a type of “versatile, mercurial” young man, of which Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* is another example, in whom we see, Pater says, “perhaps, a reflex of Shakspere himself, when he has just become able to stand aside from and estimate the first period of his poetry”.²⁴

In “Sir Thomas Browne”, Pater finds a close coordination between Browne’s writings and his style; but by this time, 1886, he has become interested in the way writers, even the most intimate, reflect, as well as their own lives, the age in which they lived. Pater states that in the seventeenth century it was possible to write, as Browne did, for the “friendly reader”, in a confessional style, without feeling the restrictions implicit in writing for a public audience, and, to Pater, this freedom accounts for the charm of “absolute sincerity” in Browne’s diction.²⁵ But Pater extends the significance of Browne still further, by seeing a psychological constant in the mental process by which he formulates the primary, religious matter of his work: namely, that “in the management of opinion, their own or that of others”, “the force of men’s temperaments” plays a large role.²⁶ This is an idea that he had developed in *Marius the Epicurean* and “Sebastian van Storck”.

In the essay on Coleridge published in *Appreciations* in 1889, Pater refers to “the philosophic critic”, in a sentence not in either of his two preceding essays on Coleridge, from which most of the 1889 essay was drawn.²⁷ The philosophic critic, according to this reference, is one who concentrates on the process by which an author thinks and writes. Pater’s statement about Browne that illustrates the type of holistic psychological process by which some persons reach philosophic conclusions seems an application of this definition of the philosophic critic, before the term was introduced.

All of the essays that I have mentioned besides those in *The Renaissance* were gathered by Pater in 1889 in *Appreciations*. In “Style”, written in 1888 and placed as the introductory essay in *Appreciations*, he developed the theory to support his application of the idea, in six of the essays in the book, that “the style is the man”, using the terms *soul* and *mind* to indicate qualities of style that reflect the author’s mentality. *Soul*, the quality of subjectivity that Pater had associated with style in “Charles

24. “Love’s Labours Lost”, in *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style*, London, 1889, 174-75.

25. “Sir Thomas Browne”, *Appreciations*, 130-31.

26. *Ibid.*, 164.

27. “Coleridge”, *Appreciations*, 81.

Lamb” and “Sir Thomas Browne”, is equated in “Style” with *sense of fact* and the *vraie vérité*, which is specifically defined as the “most intimate form of truth”.²⁸ *Mind*, an element in style that Pater had not promoted in theory before, is defined as the faculty responsible for logical structure, or “literary architecture”,²⁹ which had earlier been designated as a quality in which Sir Thomas Browne was deficient.³⁰

In keeping with his habit of trying to subsume more and more ideas under one concept, Pater in “Style” equates the expressive mode of criticism, which perceives identification of style and the man, with *aesthetic criticism* (by the revised definition), which perceives, in good art, identification of form and matter. He states:

If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then, literature, by finding its specific excellence in absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere, of all good art.³¹

In other words, when an author expresses thought exactly in words, matter and form are blended.

However, in accordance with some of his conclusions about art in “*Measure for Measure*”, *Marius the Epicurean*, and *Gaston de Latour*, that good art can at times be irrelevant to one’s concerns, or frivolous, or entangled with evil, Pater draws upon his appreciation of mimesis to explain the necessity of an additional feature in “great art”: “It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends”. He states that art will be great “if, over and above those qualities I summed up as mind and soul — that colour and mystic perfume, and that reasonable structure, it has something of the soul of humanity in it, and finds its logical, its architectural place, in the great structure of human life”.³² He reinforced the idea that matter is important by adding to “Romanticism”, when renaming it the “Postscript” to *Appreciations*, the following statement:

28. “Style”, *Appreciations*, 4, 32.

29. *Ibid.*, 20.

30. “Sir Thomas Browne”, *Appreciations*, 130.

31. “Style”, *Appreciations*, 35.

32. *Ibid.*, 36.

Material for the artist, motives of inspiration, are not yet exhausted: our curious, complex, aspiring age still abounds in subjects for aesthetic manipulation by the literary as well as by other forms of art. For the literary art, at all events, the problem just now is, to induce order upon the contorted, proportionless accumulation of our knowledge and experience, our science and history, our hopes and disillusion.³³

In "Shakspere's English Kings", the last written of the essays collected in *Appreciations*, Pater applies in part the mimetic method used in "*Measure for Measure*", by discussing its truths about "average" unheroic human nature thrust into prominent roles in life, or, to use his thematic term, "the irony of kingship".³⁴ However, he finds Shakespeare's *King Richard the Second*, the main subject of the essay, to be more artistic than *Measure for Measure* by the standard of excellence enunciated in "The School of Giorgione", and in the process claims that a blend of form and matter is the real basis of unified effect in the drama rather than the three unities embodied in ancient Greek drama. He judges *King Richard the Second* as follows:

With *Romeo and Juliet* ... it belongs to a small group of plays, where, by happy birth and consistent evolution, dramatic form approaches to something like the unity of a lyrical ballad, a lyric, a song, a single strain of music Just there, in that vivid single impression left on the mind when all is over, not in any mechanical limitation of time and place, is the secret of the "unities" — the true imaginative unity — of the drama.³⁵

In this essay he does not equate effective artistic effect with perfect self-portraiture, as in "Style", because an artist can achieve an artistic blend of form and matter when not attempting self-portraiture, as Shakespeare does in this play.

Pater's primary critical works of the 1890s, "Prosper Mérimée" (1890), "Raphael" (1892), and *Plato and Platonism* (1893), share a common interest of Pater's at this time, one that he had explored in almost all of his fiction, the relation of the creative individual to the age in which he lives. In a sentence added to the "Postscript" of *Appreciations* in 1889, Pater reiterates a theme from "Sir Thomas Browne": "Appealing, as he

33. "Postscript", *Appreciations*, 263.

34. "Shakspere's English Kings", *Appreciations*, 196.

35. *Ibid.*, 210-12.

may, to precedent in this matter [on how scholars should write], the scholar will still remember that if ‘the style is the man’ it is also the age ...”.³⁶ In the critical works of the 1890s, Pater seems to be studying how, precisely, the writers that he discusses relate to their historical ages. He portrays Mérimée as one type of person who emerged in the nineteenth century, “after Kant’s criticism of the mind”³⁷ — an ironic nihilist, who, having found “the hollow ring of fundamental nothingness under the apparent surface of things”, compensated for his disillusionment by “feeding all his scholarly curiosity, his imagination, the very eye” on “the, to him ever delightful, relieving, reassuring spectacle” of the surface of life, noting the “rude, crude, naked force in men and women wherever it could be found”.³⁸ “Prosper Mérimée” is unique in Pater’s canon of criticism, because for once he had chosen to write on the works of a man with whom he could not empathize. Pater says, “You seem to find your hand on a serpent, in reading him”.³⁹ The extreme differences in the temperaments of Pater and Mérimée can be seen in their opposite attitudes toward Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*. In the concluding paragraph of “Style”, Pater places this novel with *The Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The English Bible* as an example of great art. Mérimée, however, scorned Hugo and *Les Misérables*. He wrote in *Lettres à une Inconnue*, in September 1869, shortly after the novel was published:

Society becomes every day more stupid. In this connection, have you read *Les Misérables*, and heard what is said of it? This is another instance in which I find the human race inferior to that of the gorilla.⁴⁰

In “Postscript”, Pater praises Hugo as one of the writers who express pity, one of the qualities that he assigns to Romanticism,⁴¹ but he says in “Prosper Mérimée” that Mérimée expresses the terror of tragedy, but not

36. “Postscript”, *Appreciations*, 263.

37. “Prosper Mérimée”, *Fortnightly Review*, 54 (December 1890), 852.

38. *Ibid.*, 853.

39. *Ibid.*, 860.

40. Prosper Mérimée, *Letters to an Unknown*, 2 vols, trans. Olive Edwards Palmer, in *The Novels, Tales, and Letters of Prosper Mérimée*, 8 vols, ed. George Saintsbury, New York, 1906, VIII, 173.

41. *Appreciations*, 256-57.

the pity.⁴² Pater praises only one aspect of Mérimée's style, *mind*, stating: "Structure, proportion, design, a sort of architectural coherency: that was the aim of his method in the art of literature, in that form of it, especially, which he will live by, in fiction".⁴³ But, according to Pater, Mérimée's style had no *soul*;⁴⁴ his style was "impeccably correct, cold-blooded, impersonal", expressing no "subjectivities, colourings, peculiarities of mental refraction", or "half-lights".⁴⁵ And yet it is as an expressive critic that Pater judges Mérimée, stating that he perfects "nobody's style", "thus vindicating anew by its very impersonality that much-worn, but not untrue saying, that the style is the man ...".⁴⁶

"Raphael" is a piece of historic criticism rather than aesthetic criticism. When Pater states Raphael's *formula*, he does not describe the virtue in Raphael's painting that explains his peculiar appeal as the aesthetic critic described in the "Preface" would; he relates Raphael to somewhat older painters of the age — Perugino, Pinturicchio, Francia, Masolino, Masaccio, Bartolomeo, Leonardo, Michelangelo — who contributed their leading qualities to the formation of his genius. Pater summarizes Raphael's process of development by stating: "The *formula* of his genius, if we must have one, is *this*: genius by accumulation; the transformation of meek scholarship into genius — triumphant power of genius."⁴⁷ In being a quintessential scholar Raphael reflects, according to Pater, the age in which he lived, an age which "found perhaps its chief enjoyment in the attitude of the scholar" (*ibid.*).

When Pater began preparing for book publication his lecture series "Plato and Platonism", first presented formally at Oxford during the Hilary Term of 1891, he was a richly resourceful critic who knew that no single method was adequate to the interpretation of a great thinker and writer. Pater brought to the interpretation of Plato his *sense of fact*, which was conditioned by the leading apprehension of his age, the Darwinian idea of evolutionary development; informed by the study of Classical, Judeo-Christian, and modern philosophy, history, literature, and art, as well as a career-long study of Plato, upon whose dialogues, principally the

42. "Prosper Mérimée", 860.

43. *Ibid.*, 856.

44. *Ibid.*, 864.

45. *Ibid.*, 859, 864.

46. *Ibid.*, 864.

47. "Raphael", *Fortnightly Review*, 58 (October 1892), 458.

Republic, he had lectured during twenty-six terms between 1872 and 1892;⁴⁸ and individualized by his sensuousness and homoerotic sensibility. All of these elements help define the *sense* in his *sense of fact*, an excellent organ for divining truths about Plato and his significance.

In the first chapter of *Plato and Platonism*, Pater defines his historic method of criticism, distinguishing it from the “dogmatic method”, similar to the new historicist method today, in which a writer’s ideas are judged to be true or false according to their “congruity with the assumptions” of thinkers contemporary with the critic.⁴⁹ He also distinguishes his method from the “eclectic or syncretic method”, in which the critic combines some ideas from one philosophy and some from another, making them fit a “pre-conceived system” (*P&P*, 9). He states that “the really critical study of [Plato]” (*P&P*, 11) can be effected only by the “historic method, which bids us replace the doctrine, or the system, we are busy with ... as far as possible in the group of conditions, intellectual, social, material, amid which it was actually produced” (*P&P*, 9). The historic method was, of course, not new. As Lewis Campbell pointed out in his review of *Plato and Platonism*, it had been in use for forty years,⁵⁰ and Pater himself had discussed “the Dogmatic and Historical methods” in 1867 in his lectures entitled “The History of Philosophy”;⁵¹ further, it is likely that it had been his custom in lecturing on Plato at Oxford to apply the historic method.

In applying this method in *Plato and Platonism*, Pater does not elaborate upon the material element, the physical environment of Greece, as Winckelmann had done in *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, and he does not weigh the significance of social and political forces in Plato’s Athens. He does, however, set Plato’s philosophy into the context of earlier philosophies and, by its influence, into the context of later philosophies. His subject is Platonism in the history of Western philosophy as well as Plato. For Pater, the historic method merges into the philosophical method described in “Coleridge”, the chief concern of which is the author’s intellectual process, as the following statement shows:

48. William F. Shuter, “Pater as Don”, *Prose Studies*, 11 (May 1988), 43-44.

49. *Plato and Platonism: a Series of Lectures*, Library edn, London, 1910, 8-9; hereafter referred to as *P&P*.

50. Lewis Campbell, review of *Plato and Platonism*, *Classical Review*, 7 (June 1893), 264.

51. T.H. Ward, quoted by A.C. Benson, in *Walter Pater*, London and New York, 1906, 20.

The business of the young scholar ... in reading Plato, is ... to follow intelligently, but with strict indifference, the mental process there, as he might witness a game of skill; better still, as in reading *Hamlet* or *The Divine Comedy*, so in reading *The Republic*, to watch, for its dramatic interest, the spectacle of a powerful, of a sovereign intellect, translating itself, amid a complex group of conditions which can never in the nature of things occur again, at once pliant and resistant to them, into a great literary monument. (*P&P*, 10-11)

What links the historic method and the philosophical method is the “indifference” or disinterested, nonpartisan attitude of the critic.

To say that Pater applied the historic method does not mean that he thought Plato’s works were products of his age; however much his mind was conditioned by living in a particular place at a particular time in a particular philosophic environment, Plato would not have thought and written as he did, Pater assumed, had he not possessed certain personal qualities. In accordance with his assumptions about the expressiveness of the man, Pater states in his headnote to *Plato and Platonism*: “By Platonism is meant not Neo-Platonism of any kind, but the leading principles of Plato’s doctrine, which I have tried to see in close connexion with himself as he is presented in his own writings” (*P&P*, 1). Pater uses the expressive method throughout the book, in conjunction with other methods, to find the man in the style. He says, in effect, that the main reason Plato’s thinking is so extensive and profound is that such diverse elements as love of “the unseen, the transcendental” and love of “the *visible world*” (*P&P*, 126) mingle in his mind to make him receptive to a wide range of intense impressions; for example: “Passing through the crowd of human beings, he notes the sounds alike of their solemn hymns and their pettiest handicraft” (*P&P*, 127). Pater continually reminds the reader of the peculiar, sometimes conflicting, tendencies of Plato’s “mental constitution” (*P&P*, 126) and their relationship to his peculiar views on the subjects he treats, such as the Many and the One (*P&P*, 151ff). This expressive method leads Pater in Chapter VI, “The Genius of Plato”, to write one of his most brilliant pieces of aesthetic criticism of the type described in the “Preface”, because, as with Pater’s Luca della Robbia, the personal qualities of Plato’s works constitute their *virtue*, their peculiar attraction to the reader. An aesthetic critic at this point, Pater states Plato’s *formula*: “The lover, who is become a lover of the invisible, but still a lover, and therefore, literally, a seer, of it, carrying an elaborate cultivation of the bodily senses, of eye and ear, their natural or acquired fineness ... into the world of intellectual abstractions; seeing and hearing

there too, associating for ever all the imagery of things seen with the conditions of what primarily exists only for the mind, filling that ‘hollow land’ with delightful colour and form ...” (*P&P*, 139-40).

In short, in *Plato and Platonism* Pater uses a symphony of critical methods, and he knew exactly what he was doing. He introduces “The Genius of Plato” with a very instructive description of the necessity of employing more than one critical method if a criticism is to be *complete*:

All true criticism of philosophic doctrine, as of every other product of human mind, must begin with an historic estimate of the conditions, antecedent and contemporary, which helped to make it precisely what it was. But a complete criticism does not end there. In the evolution of abstract doctrine as we find it written in the history of philosophy, if there is always, on one side, the fatal, irresistible, mechanic play of circumstance — the circumstances of a particular age, which may be analysed and explained; there is always also, as if acting from the opposite side, the comparatively inexplicable force of a personality resistant to, while it is moulded by, them. It might even be said that the trial-task of criticism, in regard to literature and art no less than to philosophy, begins exactly where the estimate of general conditions, of the conditions common to all the products of this or that particular age — of the “environment” — leaves off, and we touch what is unique in the individual genius which contrived after all, by force of will, to have its own masterful way with that environment. (*P&P*, 124-25)

Pater thought *Plato and Platonism* to be his best book, the one most likely to survive.⁵² Critics who wonder why he took this view have not given enough consideration to his ideal of complete criticism, which he came closest to achieving in this, his last, book.

In conclusion, Pater was not shackled by critical theory, aesthetic or otherwise. His theoretical statements were always generalizations based on his own earlier practice, and after enunciating a theory, he did not feel compelled to practice it exclusively. He used aesthetic, mimetic, expressive, philosophic, and historic modes of criticism wherever they seemed to him the appropriate means to illuminate his subject, for, after all, to him literature, painting, and sculpture mattered, not only as artefact, but also as art, expression, and substance for contemplation.

52. Benson, 162.

**AFTER STUDIES:
WALTER PATER'S CANCELLED BOOK, OR
DIONYSUS AND GAY DISCOURSE IN THE 1870s**

LAUREL BRAKE

It had long been argued by scholars that the period of the 1870s, after the appearance of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in 1873, was one of retrenchment for Walter Pater, a decent reaction to the decorous unease (the British equivalent to roars of disapproval) which greeted the book from the pulpit, the university, and some sections of the press.¹ The retrospective retrenchment theory was based heavily on the record of Pater's publications, *book* publication, with a dozen years separating the first book (*Studies*, 1873) from the second (*Marius the Epicurean*, 1885), and on the removal of the "Conclusion" of *Studies* from the second edition of 1877, accompanied by a change of *title*. Moreover, bibliographical and biographical work in the last thirty years, by Larry Evans and Billie Inman, seemed to substantiate the retrenchment construction, with the revelation of a cancelled book in 1878 in Evans' edition of Pater's letters, and a compromising involvement of Pater with an undergraduate in 1874 in a revelatory piece of research by Billie Inman.²

A dissenter was Richard Dellamora (later of *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*, 1990), who early on claimed that Pater's revisions to the remaining text of the 1877 edition balanced the loss of the "Conclusion" and strengthened the homoerotic content. I want to try and build on this work, by mapping certain aspects of the homophobic environment in which Pater was working, construing the eclectic character of his writing after *The Renaissance*, and exploring permutations of the cancelled book; later elements of this trajectory include a second suppression of the essay on William Morris (from which the "Conclusion"

1. Hereafter *Studies*, and subsequent editions *The Renaissance*.

2. Billie Andrew Inman, "Estrangement and Connection: Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett, and William M. Hardinge", in *Pater in the 1990s*, eds Laurel Brake and Ian Small, Greensboro: NC, 1991, 1-20.

had been extricated) in *Appreciations* (1890), and the publication of *Greek Studies* posthumously in 1895, all of which took place in the context of what was a mined terrain, a war zone. In terms of information, little of what I am working with is new, regarding the nineteenth century. What is new is our late twentieth-century vantage point.

Among scholars outside the gay community, the reading of canonical writing as gay discourse remains controversial. Pater scholars are no exception, and there is increasingly a politics of Pater studies which wishes to preserve Pater from the depredations of gender criticism, and in varying degrees from the death of the author, the birth of the reader, and the fissures of textuality that the new generation of theory, from structuralism to post-modernism, has posited. The challenge that post-structuralism poses to the category of the aesthetic and to aestheticism is visible in high relief in the debates around the contemporary constructions of Pater. The Beast, the “other” in Pater’s writing is denied, its various definitions (homoeroticism, sado-masochism, coded language, and above all fragmentation, discontinuity, irresolution) “overcome” (and often as not, not even dignified/named by discussion) by classical models of resolution and unification, whether Hegelian, Kantian, Christian, or any other model which results in the preservation of aesthetic form, unity, and above all of Beauty. Played out at the moment in Pater studies is the argument about the unified subject of humanism or the split, fragmented (and multiple) subject of the postmodern — the postmodern, which after all *does* offer its own model for “art”, which *permits* the fragmentations of Pater’s texts and his “periodical” mode of cultural production. The publishing record shows us that, with very few exceptions (*Marius* being the most substantial), almost all of Pater’s work appeared initially in periodicals as articles or lectures.

My reading of Pater’s writing after *Studies* is of texts that persist in the exploration of English Romanticism in the face of Arnold’s Greek classicism, insist on a classicism which itself contains important strains of romanticism, and persist in exploring the possibilities of what we now term “gay” discourse and what was variously named in the period as inversion, Uranian, Greek. There has been an attempt by scholars to appropriate the 1870s material as part of the case for retrenchment, and my first section addresses this issue by briefly examining “Wordsworth” and the Greek essays of 1876. I shall go on to consider various constructions of authorship that the three models of the cancelled book generate, and to offer another hypothesis about the conditions which led to cancellation. And lastly, I want to glance at what I choose to see as the real and ghostly progeny of the cancelled book, *Appreciations, Three Short*

Stories (another cancelled book, according to William Shuter)³ and *Greek Studies*, and their moments and strategies of publication.

I will not rehearse here the reception of *Studies* after it appeared in the spring of 1873; many of the reviews are available in Robert Seiler's *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage*; and a number of other relevant documents are quoted or cited by Billie Inman in *Walter Pater's Reading*.⁴ There were unfavourable (as well as favourable) reviews, denunciatory sermons (one by Pater's ex-tutor), and disapproving letters from one-time friends such as John Wordsworth, Pater's colleague at Brasenose College. What made matters worse was that in February 1874, only ten months after *Studies* appeared, letters between Pater and a young man, an Oxford undergraduate, were passed to Benjamin Jowett at Balliol, and allegedly the two were found embracing on a college stairwell as well. It appeared that the various textual examples of the nuanced "unease" of reviewers, colleagues, and churchmen (in this Victorian context these categories overlap!) now had a basis in life.

No matter here the culpability or possible victimization of Pater by Jowett (who seemed to deal more indulgently with his aberrant undergraduate who was affectionately known as "the Balliol bugger"). It is likely that as a result, immediately, Pater was denied his right through seniority to a vacant Proctorship: his career prospects within the University were stunted, and never recovered. After February 1874 Pater was particularly vulnerable, in what was a more general atmosphere of policed sexuality within a still all-male University, where all the students were men until 1879, and where the great number of staff were clerics and unmarried; both married Fellows and non-clerical Fellows were just making inroads on Oxford in 1874. A rundown of Pater's contemporaries and acquaintances shows evidence of both the ubiquity of homosocial and homoerotic bonds and the anxious disciplining of homosexuality privately in educational institutions, with J.A. Symonds (Oxford), Oscar Browning (Eton), William Cory (Eton) all losing their posts, and Simeon Solomon and Oscar Wilde tried in court, publicly. Homophobia was an anxiety that frequently surfaced, in sermons about masturbation, and in rhetoric about manliness, for example. The incident of Pater and William Money Hardinge was just that, an "incident" in a succession of like incidents of

3. William F. Shuter, personal communication, Pater Colloquium, Eastern Michigan University, July 1994.

4. *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robert Seiler, London, 1980; Billie Andrew Inman, *Walter Pater's Reading: A Bibliography of his Library Borrowings and Literary References, 1858-1873*, New York and London, 1981.

late nineteenth-century British culture. Pater's successful negotiation as a gay man and a gay writer throughout his life, but particularly in the 1870s, attests to a canniness and strategy which prevented him from losing his post (unthinkable to a man like Pater with two sisters to support at that time, and very little private income), or, like Wilde or Simeon Solomon, the painter, being embroiled with the law, or like John Addington Symonds feeling forced to leave the country to lead his life, or like countless nineteenth-century gay men (including Symonds, William Cory, and Wilde) choosing to marry both to banish the outlawed desire and the public suspicion.

The attacks on Pater and *Studies* continued into 1876 with W.H. Mallock's depiction of Pater as Mr Rose in *The New Republic*, a serialized novel, in *Belgravia* between July and December. In March 1877 the Rev. Richard Tyrwhitt's attack on Symonds and "The Greek Spirit in Modern Literature" in the *Contemporary Review* resulted in both Symonds and Pater withdrawing their candidature for the Professorship of Poetry at the University. It is in this climate that Pater was writing, and to which he responded by withdrawing the offending "Conclusion" from *Studies* in 1877 but with some dignity, *without* explanation; and by abandoning any claim to history and withdrawing to "art and poetry" in his change of title from *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*; both the strategy of the professorship and the book took place in 1877.

The withdrawal of the various permutations of the new book project occurred between March 1877 and November 1878. But beside this catalogue of withdrawals, I want to set some acts of intervention. First of all, throughout the 1870s Pater continued writing for the progressive *Fortnightly Review*, edited at that time by John Morley, which was printing in 1875, for example, Swinburne on Shakespeare, Symonds on classical texts, Edward Dowden on Wordsworth, and George Saintsbury on Baudelaire; it was the periodical from which several of Pater's *Renaissance* essays had stemmed. Secondly, in the very teeth of his revisions, both of omission and commission, to the second edition of *The Renaissance*, Pater writes to Alexander Macmillan, his publisher, in March 1877, that he wished to "finish and print"⁵ his four pieces on Greek literature, three of which had recently appeared in the *Fortnightly*.

This wish and nascent plan to publish these essays in book form, which risked their further scrutiny and visibility by book reviewers, also

5. *Letters of Walter Pater*, ed. Lawrence Evans, Oxford, 1970, 21. Quoted in Billie Inman, *Pater and His Reading, 1874-1877*, New York and London, 1990, 357.

draws to our attention Pater's decision to *begin* in 1875 a series of essays on classical Greek art, artifacts, and texts which saw no less than three essays on classical subjects published in the *Fortnightly* in January, February, and December of 1876. They were on the Greek myths of Demeter and Persephone (January and February) and Dionysus (December). The second part of the Dionysus piece, its structure echoing the two part "Demeter and Persephone", although written by October 1878 when it was set in type by Macmillan, was not published until 1889. If Pater's reason for halting the publication had any basis in the explanation he supplied to Macmillan — dissatisfaction with his work — the eleven year gap between 1878 and 1889 suggests that in this essay lies a partial explanation. In the climate I have described, Pater seems to have been confident that he could use the status of classics within the University, and its virtual confinement to male readers of his own class (since education for women and for working class men commonly excluded classical languages), to "carry" and acceptably screen his *range* of interests in Greek culture. Linda Dowling's book on *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (1994) indicates ways in which "classics" in Oxford accommodated a number of different discourses, including the homoerotic and homosocial.

Although it has been suggested by Inman that Pater's essays on Greek subjects go some way to upholding Victorian religion and domestic values,⁶ the unmistakeable balance of interest in them is overwhelmingly toward writing the sexualized body, both of women in "Demeter and Persephone", and the male body in the first part of "Dionysus". Dionysus is identified as the male counterpart to Demeter; to the extent that he is characterized as a male generator of Life, he is placed in the position of women: "the whole productive power of the earth is in him."⁷

And in the short, terse paragraph in the first part of "Demeter and Persephone" on Demeter *Thesmophoros* — "the guardian of married life, the deity of the discretion of wives" — one sentence is the thudding "She is therefore the founder of civilised order" (GS, 108), with the second of three more expansive. Another sentence on her role as "patron of travellers" (GS, 108), and the tour of duty is finished. The main body of the "Demeter and Persephone" essay is on the goddesses of "deeper mythology" (GS, 94) which Pater develops ultimately into an attack on the

6. Inman, *Pater and his Reading*, 384.

7. Walter Pater, *Greek Studies*, ed. C.L. Shadwell, London, 1895, 6; hereafter *GS*.

unattributed (Arnoldian) argument of representing Greek religion as characterised by “cheerfulness”.

The “worship of sorrow,” as Goethe called it, is sometimes supposed to have had almost no place in the religion of the Greeks. Their religion has been represented as a religion of mere cheerfulness, the worship by an untroubled, unreflecting humanity, conscious of no deeper needs, of the embodiments of its own joyous activity. It helped to hide out of their sight those traces of decay and weariness, of which the Greeks were constitutionally shy, to keep them from peeping too curiously into certain shadowy places, appropriate enough to the gloomy imagination of the middle age; and it hardly proposed to itself to give consolation to people who, in truth, were never “sick or sorry.” But this familiar view of Greek religion is based on a consideration of a part only of what is known concerning it, and really involves a misconception ... (GS, 110-11).

This “misconception” denies the romantic element in Greek poetry and art, and leads to a “wearisome calm” (GS, 111). Pater argues that the worship of sorrow functions positively. Much of what is designated in this passage as “painful” and “strange” is turned to repeatedly and adeptly in the text, as in this example which juxtaposes images of violence with the tale of the Sleeping Beauty:

[Persephone’s] story is, indeed, but the story, in an intenser form, of Adonis, of Hyacinth, of Adrastus — the king’s blooming son, fated, in the story of Herodotus, to be wounded to death with an iron spear — of Linus, a fair child who is torn to pieces by hounds every spring-time — of the English Sleeping Beauty (GS, 109-10).

At places in the essay, the conjoining of Demeter and Persephone (“twin-named”) as “venerable, or aweful goddesses” (GS, 109, 104) results in a range of roles and *personae* which is both promiscuous in its multiplicity and carnivalesque, that is parodic in a Bakhtinian sense.⁸ This *topos* and adeptitude are also evident in “A Study of Dionysus” in a passage which makes a claim — sentimental, grotesque, and sexual alike — for the pathos (!) of Satyrs:

But the best spirits have found in them also a certain human pathos, as in displaced beings, coming even nearer to most men, in their

8. See, for example, GS, 104-105.

very roughness, than the noble and delicate person of the vine; dubious creatures, half-way between the animal and human kinds, speculating wistfully on their being, because not wholly understanding themselves and their place in nature in some happy moment Praxiteles conceived a model, often repeated, which concentrates this sentiment of true humour concerning them; a model of dainty natural ease in posture, but with the legs slightly crossed, as only lowly-bred gods are used to carry them, and with some puzzled trouble of youth, you might wish for a moment to smoothe away, puckering the forehead a little, between the pointed ears, on which the goodly hair of his animal strength grows low. Little by little, the signs of brute nature are subordinated, or disappear; and at last, Robetta ... has expressed it in its most exquisite form The puck-noses have grown delicate, so that, with Plato's infatuated lover, you may call them winsome, if you please; and no one would wish those hairy little shanks away, with which one of the small Pans walks at her [Ceres'] side, grasping her skirt stoutly; while the other, the sick or weary one, rides in the arms of Ceres herself, who in graceful Italian dress, and decked airily with fruit and corn, steps across a country of cut sheaves, pressing it closely to her, with a child's peevish trouble in its face, and its small goat-legs and tiny hoofs folded over together, precisely after the manner of a little child (GS, 8-10).

At several points in this and the other Greek essays of 1876 the depiction of the Mona Lisa as a *femme fatale* in *The Renaissance* is echoed, repeated, as in this portrait of the "older" myths of Demeter. Pater pursues his *Studies* style and strategy even while he abandons the "Conclusion":

The worship of Demeter belongs to that older religion, nearer to the earth She is the goddess of dark caves, and is not wholly free from monstrous form. She gave men the first fig in one place, the first poppy in another She is the mother of the vine also; and the assumed name by which she called herself in her wanderings, is Dôs — a gift She knows the magic powers of certain plants, cut from her bosom, to bane or bless; and, under one of her epithets, herself presides over the springs, as also coming from the secret places of the earth (GS, 101-102).

One may compare the stylistic strategy used here to one in an earlier passage (GS, 95-100) which likens the alleged Romanticism of the Classical age to its counterpart in Wordsworth "the great modern pantheist" (GS, 97) and Blake. These are counterblasts to the Arnoldian rendition of ancient Greek culture and texts, and to Arnold's early

suspicion of English romanticism which “did not know enough”. So, in addition to pursuing the project of exploring the possibilities of gay discourse in its fixation on the power and potential for evil of the *femme fatale* and the body of the animal/youths, the text engages with the question of the nature of ancient Greek culture, and the cultural value attached to Romanticism in relation to “modernity”. All of these issues — gay discourse, and the nature of Classicism and of Romanticism — were prominent in *Studies*, and show Pater to be adhering to his critical interests, despite homophobic pressures to desist.

Likewise, the Wordsworth essay, published two years before in 1874 in the *Fortnightly Review*, continues the textual critique found in *Studies*, defending Romanticism, situating Wordsworth in a radical tradition (including Shelley, George Sand and Gautier), and claiming for Wordsworth the greatness Arnold claimed for the ancients. If self-censorship and invisibility were conceded on some fronts, much of what Pater produced and did publish in this period may be counted, not among the concessions, but as vital and engaged discursive acts. As well as absence, there is presence; and silence, as Foucault reminds us, is an eloquent counter-discourse.

It also should be noted that in the 1870s Pater had his defenders, and that in the very issue of the *Fortnightly* in which the second part of “Demeter and Persephone” appears, George Saintsbury singles out Pater as a younger writer to note in his piece on “Modern English Prose”. The qualities which Saintsbury praises prove to be those which his critics castigate, the nature of his prose; simply glancing at “the merely picturesque beauty of ... *Studies*”, Saintsbury goes on to make a claim for the “possibilities of modern English prose” which he alleges that Pater sets out in a prose of formal rigour and austerity:

The important point for us is the purely formal or regular merit of this style.... the subordinate and yet independent beauty of the sentences when taken separately from the paragraph

A bungler would have depended, after the fashion of the day, upon strongly coloured epithets, upon complicated and quasi-poetic cadences of phrase, at least upon an obtrusively voluptuous softness of thought and a cumbrous protraction of sentence. Not so Mr Pater. There is not to be discovered in his work the least sacrifice of the phrase to the word, of the clause to the phrase, of the sentence to the clause, of the paragraph to the sentence. Each holds its own proper place and dignity while contributing duly to the dignity and place of its superior in the hierarchy There is no surer mark of the highest style than this separate and yet

subordinate finish. In the words of Mr Ruskin, it is “so modulated that every square inch is a perfect composition”.⁹

I suspect there are two forces working in Pater’s favour here, his editor John Morley who, juxtaposing this article with Pater’s in one issue, is backing Pater up as part of the *Fortnightly*’s literary property; and the contributor, Pater’s acquaintance George Saintsbury, who met Pater through mutual friends in Oxford in the late 1860s, and in later years continued to be a great defender of Pater’s prose.

I want to turn now to the non-unitary subject of the cancelled book proposals which locate Pater’s work in a variety of discourses: first, in March 1877, the suggestion seemed to be to publish the four Greek essays separately which would have foregrounded Pater’s entry into the classical lists, confronting the cultural criticism of Matthew Arnold, but also classical scholarship, and the discourses of the new social science of anthropology with its interest in myth. There was also the possibility that Pater’s projected book would take its place beside works primarily characterized by their discourses of gender, homoerotic works such as J.A. Symonds’ *Greek Poets* (1875) or William Cory’s *Ionica* (1857) — poems similarly “Greek”, as Tyrwhitt was even then pointing out in the *Contemporary Review*. This plan, for reasons unknown, but imaginable (too short; too dangerous on a number of counts — Arnold, gender, scholarship) was dropped.

Then in October 1878, Pater proposed a second expanded book of more of his *Fortnightly* essays, with the addition of one from *Macmillan’s Magazine*. The title now suggested was “*The School of Giorgione*” and *Other Studies*. Whereas the contents of the first proposal seemed to signal that the author of *The Renaissance/Studies* had turned to a new kind of work — Greek studies as opposed to Renaissance art history — this second title suggests continuities with the Renaissance volume, both in its foregrounding of Italian Renaissance art and its echo of the word “Studies”. Its Greek character was now diluted or screened, firstly by the single title on Renaissance art, “Giorgione”, published in October 1877 in the *Fortnightly Review*, just after the second edition of *The Renaissance* appeared in May; secondly by three essays on nineteenth-century Romanticism — one called “Romanticism”, and pieces on Wordsworth and Charles Lamb; and finally by two essays on Shakespeare. These last five essays were to form the core of *Appreciations*, Pater’s volume of essays on English literature published over a decade later, in 1889.

9. George Saintsbury, “Modern English Prose”, *Fortnightly Review*, 19 n.s. (February 1876), 257.

Retrospectively, it seems that by foregrounding Giorgione, this proposal looked backwards to Pater's early interests in Renaissance art, rather than forward to what emerged as his abiding interests — in modernity with Romanticism as its mode, and the classics, specifically *Greek* studies. What is notable is the eclectic nature of this *Giorgione* collection, and the facetting and diversity of Pater's interests in this decade; interests which were to remain apparently diverse (particularly in terms of academic disciplines: art history, "English" [not yet a "discipline" at Oxford], modern languages, and classics). This diversity, it should be noted, was masked by the fiction he soon afterwards began to write, and by the next book he *did* publish, in 1885 — *Marius the Epicurean*, a novel. But as it is, the proposed *Giorgione* collection constructs Pater as a belle lettrist, in keeping with the authorial persona of the second edition of *Studies* entitled *The Renaissance. Studies in Art and Poetry*. Some reviewers of the first edition of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* had expected and demanded an historian.

It is significant, however, that a month later, in November 1878, as printing of *Giorgione and other Studies* was under way, Pater suggested another title to Macmillan, *Dionysus and other Studies*, which foregrounded the Greek studies again; these did after all constitute one of the two main bodies of work in the volume. However, by November 30, having read proof, Pater decided that he was dissatisfied with his work, and instructed Macmillan to abandon the book. Eventually the type was broken up. Given the controversial nature of Pater's writing, the climate of the 1870s, and his vulnerability as a University teacher known to be, or recognized or "addressed" as a gay man, decisions to publish at particular times are likely to be contingent; just as the withdrawal of the "Conclusion" in 1877 is related to the pressure of institutional Oxford, so the withdrawal of *Dionysus*, with its visible Greek material, seems likely to be effected by the vituperative and widely reported debate about aestheticism and criticism at the libel trial of Whistler versus Ruskin which took place on 25 and 26 November, just before Pater withdrew the book on the 30th. Ruskin had, intemperately and publicly, and from a position which yoked art with morality in a counter-discourse to aestheticism, denied Whistler's painting the status of art, and Whistler's "damages" of a farthing amounted to defeat; from Pater's position, it might well appear that in addition to Ruskin, in such a climate W. H. Mallock and the Rev. Tyrwhitt might welcome the opportunity, should it arise, to fulminate against *Dionysus and other Studies* which would appear in the wake of the trial.

These Greek essays and a number of others on Greek topics were never collected in Pater's lifetime. It was left to C.L. Shadwell, Pater's

long-time friend and Literary Executor to gather them and others immediately after Pater's death in July 1894, and to edit and publish them in January 1895, in what emerged as a window between Pater's death and the Wilde trials in April of that year. Had they not appeared then, it was unlikely that Shadwell would have been able to publish them as a collection for some years. William Shuter notes that a later piece, "Hippolytus Veiled", included in the posthumous *Greek Studies*, was advertised to appear in a volume of Pater's stories projected in 1892, called *Three Short Stories*. That too was not published. These suppressed Greek essays of Pater's might usefully be compared with the University lectures on Plato and Platonism that Pater did collect and publish in 1893. Conceived for public discourse, and fit for undergraduates, with the imprimatur of the academy, these treatments of Greek material could be safely published and circulated, beyond the readership of the *Fortnightly Review* where the suppressed essays had appeared.

As for the essays from the cancelled volume of 1878 which *did* appear in Pater's lifetime, in *Appreciations*, it should be noted that by the time *Appreciations* appeared in 1889, Pater may be seen to be reaching far into his past — as far back as 1868 — in order to make up this "English" volume, which excluded the Greek essays and was carried and flagged by his new piece on "Style". This volume too was dogged by accusatory reviews, even after the peace-making project of *Marius*, and in the second edition, published almost immediately in 1890, "Poems by William Morris" (from which the withdrawn "Conclusion" had been extricated) was again excluded and replaced by another essay. Pater had never risked collecting this part of the Morris essay before, and he had taken the precaution of renaming it "Aesthetic Poetry". However, even late in his career, this now established author chose to manage his reputation through self-censorship, even in the wake of having "restored" the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*'s third edition with a triumphant explanation the previous year in 1888.

Many late nineteenth-century authors in Britain worked under and with such constraints; whether self-imposed or required by an editor, censorship was a commonplace for authors such as George Moore, J.A. Symonds, Wilde, Gosse, and Hardy. The heterosexual members of this group — Moore, Gosse, and Hardy — had complained publicly about the tyranny of Mrs Grundy in *New Review* critics' forums in 1891 and after. More explicit, erotic writing was privately circulated, as may be seen in the correspondence of Symonds and Swinburne; subscription or private publication (such as Richard Burton's of the Arabian Nights in 1885) were the forms some such printed works took; some were circulated in manuscript.

Pater continued throughout his life to develop what we now call gay discourse in a range of fictional and non-fictional settings and periods, but not under the banner of Greek Studies and not, as far as is known, in the gay press, such as the *Spirit Lamp*, the *Journal of Art and Home Culture*, or the *Chameleon*. Preferring the screen of the *Fortnightly* and *Macmillan's* (or even once *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, a family journal), Pater commonly addressed a largely male readership, not on the whole differentiated into "straight" and "gay", whose interest in the spectrum of gender ranged from the homosocial to the homoerotic.

WALTER PATER, GEORGE MOORE AND R.L. STEVENSON

PETER COSTELLO

When on that fatal day in the summer of 1894, Walter Horatio Pater was stricken, fell on the stairs of his Oxford home, and died in his sister's arms, he was already a man whose time seemed to have passed. It would have astonished some of his contemporaries that his name is still alive a century later.¹ That this is so, is due in part to his own merits as a critic, and in part to the influence as a writer which he had over others.

In 1894 he was almost unknown to the wider public. Indeed, W.B. Yeats (looking back with some nostalgia from 1935 to the years of his youth) recalled someone at the time saying, "no newspaper has given him an obituary notice".² Like so many of Yeats's sweeping *obiter dicta*, this needs to be taken *cum grano salis*; for not only did *The Times* notice both Pater's death and his funeral, there was a long appreciation in the *Contemporary Review* for December 1894, which remained for some time the only extended account of the man and writer.³

The reality of some cultural events, as with some crimes, is not always as witnesses recall in their memories. To convince himself, Yeats had come to believe in the isolation of Pater, the hermit of Brasenose, and the uniqueness of his significant influence over a small number of apostles, receptive to his creed.

Yeats arranged the famous evocation of the Mona Lisa (written in the 1870s) into *vers libre* as the first item in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, whose ostensible dates were 1892-1935. Pater's death was, for Yeats, the birth of a new movement, the starting point from which modern

1. The facts of his life and death are conveniently gathered in Michael Levey, *The Case of Walter Pater*, London, 1978.

2. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935*, ed. W.B. Yeats, Oxford, 1936, viii.

3. A selection of obituaries are collected in *Walter Pater. The Critical Heritage*, ed. R.M. Seiler, London, 1980. A.C. Benson, *Walter Pater*, New York and London, 1906, complained about the difficulty in putting the actual facts of Pater's life together.

Yeats, the birth of a new movement, the starting point from which modern literature was to be measured. But there were elements of modern literature which were not Modern, in Yeats's meaning of the term. George Moore and Robert Louis Stevenson were among them, and in this paper I would like to link the influence of Pater's example and aesthetic ideals with the literary intentions, about the time of his death, of those two authors.

Pater's influence was real, yet, as we know, he had retreated from the full implications of his own ideas. Intellectual modesty had become social timidity; the life that he longed to seize upon, minute by minute, became more and more attenuated, and more carefully measured. Like Prufrock, cautiously, he measured out the moments of his being with silver coffee spoons borrowed from the senior common room.

The frank hedonism of those early writings, gathered over twenty years before into *The Renaissance* in 1873, had been replaced by what puzzled contemporaries referred to as "an esoteric and philosophic Christianity", a blend of classical philosophy and High Church ritual. He was a model of the student life, as the college chaplain, F.W. Bussell, said at his memorial sermon, from the very inapplicability of his ideals in "real life".⁴

The contempt of Jowett (which Pater earned early on at Oxford) was later shared by others, who felt that philosophy and criticism should serve a practical policy, and for whom church ritual was merely so much historical quaintness. The Victorian Age that Pater rebelled against had its mind, in general, on quite different matters. As a spokesman, it preferred Thomas Arnold.

Pater's ideals had become, as Henry James remarked, to the later agreement of George Moore, "a tendency to hunt with the Pagan hound and run with the Christian hare".⁵ The admirer of Winckelmann and the author of *Marius the Epicurean* was also the critic of *The Guardian* and the recipient of an Anglican funeral. Yet for Pater this was, in actuality, a return to the earliest influences on his mind at Oxford, those of John Keble and John Ruskin, rather than Johann Winckelmann. He was a singular amalgam.

The aesthetic movement from the 1870s onwards with which Pater's name was linked in the mind of the wider public — "The High Priest of

4. F.W. Bussell, quoted in Seiler, 284-88.

5. Joseph Hone, *The Life of George Moore*, London, 1936, 141. Cf. George Moore, *Avowals*, London, 1919, 207.

trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895. Whatever about the whores dancing in the streets, there was certainly some quiet satisfaction among right thinking folk, over the humbling, in sordid circumstances, of Pater's most prominent disciple. To the great middle class, furtive fumblings with boys from the Post Office seemed an odd resource for the aesthetically privileged, however it might be justified. The conviction of Oscar Wilde would bring to an end an era in English letters. By 1900 everyone had come down off their stilts, to echo Yeats again.⁶ New ways were already being sought or opened up by a younger generation of writers, with a less elevated view of life.

For most writers in this period, spread over nearly the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, Pater was what astronomers might call "an occult influence". Like some hidden planet, he affected the visible course of their movements, while often being himself beyond observation. His first work, it will be recalled, was the essay "Diaphaneité" (1864), in which he sketched out the emotional and intellectual character which he wished to be, and which in later writings, by now under the classicising influence of Winckelmann, he would elaborate. In reaction to the Victorian age, then at its height, Pater spoke of "Winckelmann's tendency to escape from abstract theory to intuition, to the exercise of sight and touch",⁷ the haunting longing for a lost, golden age of man and art; a devotion to physical beauty, the dedication to art and to the revealing of its mysteries, which he brought together in *The Renaissance*. Of this work, he wrote first, as is always the fact with writers, the conclusion, with its famous, or in its day, notorious, appeal. So dangerous did it become that he excluded it from other, later editions. It seemed too easily to justify attitudes (such as Wilde's) which Pater himself shrank from.

Pater recognized that while he could fully feel for the beautiful aspects of life, viciousness appalled him as an artist. He could respond to beauty, but not to the beast. This over-view of Pater's ideals must be set off against his friendship (such as it was) with George Moore, and his indirect influence on Stevenson.

Pater, Moore, and Stevenson reflect connected, contrasting, sometimes conflicting aspects of the literature of the 1890s. George Moore is the figure who allows a transition, a link, between Pater and Stevenson to be

6. Yeats, xi.

7. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, London, 1873, 154.

followed, who allows us to trace a line between *The Renaissance* and *The Beach of Falesá*, an intermittent line, but a line nevertheless.⁸

What Pater took from Winckelmann was a frank admiration of the pagan, a life at once beautiful, irrational, instinctive, and non-Christian. This had an immense appeal to George Moore, who had rejected the landed Irish-Catholicism of his childhood. It runs through Moore's work as a theme, from the *Pagan Poems* of 1881, to the classical romances of the last period from *The Brook Kerith on, Aphrodite in Aulis, Daphnis and Chloe*, and the medieval works *Héloïse and Abélard* and the tales incorporated in *A Story Teller's Holiday*. In these the influence of Pater can be clearly discerned. Moore's last prose follows Pater's famous dictum in "The School of Giorgione": it constantly aspires to the condition of music, in a quite literal sense.

Moore shared Yeats's view of Pater's crucial position as the only older writer admired by their younger generation. Moore felt this admiration all his life, at least for Pater's prose, if not for the man himself. He first read Pater, it seems, at Moore Hall, his family home lost in the depths of bleak, damp Mayo (about as unclassical, as unsensuous, a landscape, as can be imagined). This was during the summer of 1885, soon after the publication of *A Mummer's Wife*. *Marius the Epicurean* had also just appeared, and was being talked of in some circles, though it had not scored perhaps quite the sensation that Moore's novel had achieved, his first with Vizetelly, the beginning of his drive to make over the English novel and how it was presented to the world.

Pater's novel delighted him: it was "the great atonement for all the bad novels that have been written in the English language". Thus Moore wrote in *Avowals*.⁹ Pater's prose was, he claimed, the first prose that had given him any pleasure in the English language. He had returned from Paris filled with a lust for naturalistic sensation which spilled over into his own early novels. Reading Pater, however, he gained a notion of the idyl of the beauty of "mildness in life", and realized that "by a certain avoidance of the wilfully passionate and the surely ugly we may secure an aspect of life that is abiding and soul-sufficing".¹⁰ *Avowals* appeared in 1919 — yet in the 1880s, Moore was himself still writing under the influence of Zola and the modern French school (which Pater loathed). But having read *Marius*,

8. For Stevenson's achievement in this novella and the curious background to its publication, see Barry Menikoff, *Robert Louis Stevenson and "The Beach of Falesá"*, Edinburgh, 1984.

9. Moore, 195.

10. Hone, 112; cf. Moore, 178.

he went over to London, and managed to meet Pater during the season. He found the new idol surrounded (so he claimed) by old women — how very annoying for an eager young man. Years later, in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, he remarked of Pater that he hid behind a mask that never lifted, which he could not lift; he was “a shy sentimental man, all powerful in the written word, impotent in life”.¹¹ It was only the pose of Pater that he faulted — for the prose of Pater he never failed in his admiration.

Pater was one of the few writers admired by John Norton, the central character of Moore’s novel *A Mere Accident* (1887), a character directly modelled on his Galway relative the dramatist Edward Martyn, “the dear Edward” of *Hail and Farewell* (1911-1914), his intimate memoir of the Irish Revival.¹² He sent a copy of the novel to Pater (hoping, it seems, for a notice in *The Guardian* of all papers). Pater did not care for the “mere accident” itself, the rape of Norton’s fiancée by a Sussex tramp, a gratuitous act of violence that dismayed the reviewers and many readers. Beauty (whether as a young lady or an aesthetic ideal) being violated by a brutal beast was not a fable that appealed to many. Pater added in reply to Moore, “that the object of art was to enable us to escape from the crude and violent”. But the character and the interests of the aesthetic Norton were a premonitory symptom of Moore’s slow removal from the French naturalism he had imported to a different, more Paterian form.¹³

When *Confessions of a Young Man* appeared in 1886, the opinions of “Edward Dayne” (Moore’s alter ego), drew from *The Academy* the observation as to why “a disagreeable young man of bad education should have thought his memoirs worth writing”.¹⁴ But it also drew two letters from Pater, one of which was used in the new preface to *Confessions of a Young Man* in 1904. Moore was grateful not only for Pater’s commendation of *Confessions of a Young Man*, but also of *Modern Painting*. Reviewing the latter in the summer of 1893, Pater noted Moore’s natural preference for “the personal and the uncontrolled”, “the opinion and sensation one cannot help” — how very far that was from Pater himself.¹⁵ Moore often quoted the letter from Pater.¹⁶

11. Hone, *ibid.*; cf. Moore, 212.

12. A new biography of Edward Martyn, which will restore his literary reputation, is currently in preparation by Mr Jerry Nolan (London), based on a PhD for Trinity College Dublin. This will deal in depth with his relationship with Moore.

13. Hone, 130.

14. *Ibid.*, 139.

15. *Ibid.*, 141, 184.

He admired the style of Pater above that of his other contemporaries.¹⁷ Indeed, he was ready to admit he never achieved anything so finished himself. He read Pater to the end of his life, though by 1930 he could not read Balzac.¹⁸ He accepted from Vernon Lee her estimate that Pater was a better writer; Pater knew, Moore admitted, "what was right and what was futile and frivolous".¹⁹ Yet by 1924 Moore found he could not follow Pater in the manner of how a translation should be made — then and now a crucial matter of cultural exchange — but did not wish to repudiate him in public through comments in his preface to *Daphnis and Chloe*. Pater could not be criticized.²⁰ Of his own limits and Pater's achievement he said: "No man can write beyond his own mind, and Pater had a finer mind than mine." But as Desmond Shawe-Taylor and others have pointed out, while accepting Pater's touchstone of sensation, he could never follow Pater's speculations.²¹

Yet Moore's achievement as a creative writer, as a novelist rather, went beyond anything that Pater reached to. Those last privately published books though they seem almost unread today, are Moore's finest achievement, a tribute to the lasting influence of Pater. In the *Pall Mall Magazine* for August 1904, he dealt at length with Pater, remodelling the piece for *Avowals* at a later date.²² By this date Moore was in transition, *The Untilled Field* behind him, the search for a new shape still to be pursued. Moore had started as an admirer of Pater but as a disciple of Zola, and did end as a follower of Pater, and a lapsed admirer of Zola. He moved from realism to romance.

If Pater for Moore represented a remote ideal of art, Stevenson seemed to be part of a new kind of commercial success he did not care for. The movement of Stevenson was from romance to realism — counter in fact to Moore's. Pater — for Moore "the last great English writer" — had been the last great filter of English prose, he declared in 1899.²³ Since his death it had passed "through the patty pans of Mr Stevenson ... into the

16. *Ibid.*, 141.

17. *Ibid.*, 197.

18. *Ibid.*, 446.

19. *Ibid.*, 373-74.

20. *Ibid.*, 395.

21. *Ibid.*, 488-89.

22. Moore, quoted in Hone, 256-57.

23. Hone, 256, 222.

pint pot of Mr Kipling".²⁴ The dislike of Kipling never wavered. But by 1917 in the preface to *Lewis Seymour*, he was prepared to admire Stevenson's early prose. "That charming author" was the general tone.²⁵ He especially mentioned in conversation (we gather), *Travels with a Donkey* as a model of style.²⁶ The passage on Stevenson which is always alluded to is that which appears in *Confessions of a Young Man*, but in the early pages of *A Story Teller's Holiday*, just after Moore has been describing the ruins of Dublin after the Easter Rising (lamented over also by Yeats: "Changed, changed utterly, a terrible beauty is born"), he speaks of Stevenson again; of (as I understand it) Stevenson's inability to change.²⁷

But the matter was really that Stevenson did change; as we shall see, it was his readers who remain unchanged, at least in their opinion of him. Moore in any case employed John Eglinton and Colonel Longworth (incidentally, the editor who published Joyce's book reviews in the Dublin *Daily Express*) to do his reading for him. I doubt if he ever read much further into Stevenson: like Pater, Moore was no great reader of his contemporaries. And aside from an early passing remark in a letter to Colvin, Stevenson seems to have been unaffected by Pater, unmoved by Moore's criticism.

RLS remained for Moore the assiduous stylist of the early books, essays and poems. Though he might commend *Travels with a Donkey* (along with *Robinson Crusoe*), as an example of English style,²⁸ he had violently reviewed *The Master of Ballantrae*, and seems to have been prepared to ignore *Treasure Island*. Indeed he seems to have been ignorant of everything Stevenson wrote after his flight to the Pacific.

Moore had begun as a realistic novelist quite different from anything Pater admired. But by 1895 he was moving towards his later manner which is curiously more like Pater's. But Stevenson had been in his eyes, along with Kipling, too great a commercial and popular success to be taken seriously. Yet that success (an echo of the success of the early Moore) was because Stevenson was moving in a different, less exclusive direction. RLS was the object of a cult; Robert Louis Stevenson an evolving novelist.

24. *Ibid.*, 222.

25. *Ibid.*, 336-37.

26. *Ibid.*, 431.

27. George Moore, *A Story Teller's Holiday*, New York, 1926, 47-50.

28. Hone, 431.

For Pater, and for the later Moore, the classical pagan culture of Europe provided the touchstone of their own creativity. And yet the only one who actually came in contact with just such a life was R.L. Stevenson in the islands of the South Seas. There the culture of Europe, in which both Pater and Moore set all their store, was faced with, and came into conflict with another, altogether pagan culture, as ancient and as profound as the ancient Greek.

These pagan elements of the islands were not a mere aesthetic theory, an adjunct to literary craft, but a social reality. They were not a pose or a passion but a part of life. The idols of Falesá exerted a fear which neither Pater or Moore could ever have felt, but which Stevenson could, perhaps because of that Scottish Presbyterian sense of sin and damnation, that sense of guilt from which he never escaped.

The politics of Samoa (so well described in all their contemporary complexity by Professor Paul Kennedy, before he turned to universal themes of world history)²⁹ provided images that were quite beyond the range of either Pater (who would have loathed them) or Moore (who would have confused them with the passions drawn from the politics of his own native island).

Early explorers of the South Seas in the eighteenth century had drawn parallels with the classical world (though these were later dismissed by ethnographers as illusions, as Professor Smith explains in his survey of art in the South Seas).³⁰ It seemed to them that they had reached a world where the ideals of classical beauty, in the forms of the women, and the limbs of the men, still lived. Here at least it was not idle to speak of sensual and physical beauty. It was an appeal which in different ways caught the imaginations of Melville, Gauguin and Stevenson.³¹ But here was in reality a paganism which would have disgusted the calm of Oxford, or the refinements of Ebury Street. Stevenson grasped the moral qualities of that contact, at least in effect, though his early death cut off the full artistic realization. Indeed, the early death of Stevenson is one of the true

29. Paul Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle*, Dublin, 1974.

30. Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd edn, London, 1985.

31. See Charles Robert Anderson, *Melville in the South Seas*, New York, 1966; Bengt Danielsson, *Gauguin à Tahiti et aux îles Marquises*, Papeete, 1974, and Paris, 1988; and R.L. Stevenson, *In the South Seas: A Footnote to History*, and *Father Damien*; and *Our Samoan Adventure* by Fanny and Robert Louis Stevenson, London, 1956.

literary tragedies of the 1890s, so great was the potential of his development.

The Stevenson establishment on Samoa recalls a Greek classical, even Homeric, household; or the court of a small Renaissance Prince, where art and war and poetry were mixed in the pattern of daily life. In many of the Stevenson biographies there are reproduced photographs of his Samoan household: the Europeans in their heavy clothes (especially his mother) in contrast with the bare breasts and casual dress of the Samoans themselves. In the contrast between flesh and fabric suggesting Giorgione's (or is it Titian's) "Fête Champêtre". Pater's evocation of the painting in his 1877 essay, with its images of water, fresh rain, and clear air, might be taken from a description of Samoa at a certain season.³² The painting was an aesthetic conceit (which delighted Pater), the Samoan life a social reality (which revitalized Stevenson). Pagan and Christian were not opposed in Stevenson, stern son of the manse though he was.

His letters home dismayed some of his friends such as Colvin and Henley. Indeed Gosse remarked: "the fact seems to be that it is a very nice to *live* in Samoa, but not healthy to *write* there. Within a three-mile radius of Charing Cross is the literary atmosphere, I suspect."³³ We are still familiar with this breath-taking metropolitan prejudice. But Stevenson was patient:

Please remember that my life passes among my "blacks or chocolates". If I were to do as you propose, in a bit of a tiff, it would cut you off entirely from my life. You must try to exercise a trifle of imagination, and put yourself, perhaps with an effort, into some sort of sympathy with these people, or how am I to write to you?³⁴

The fey essayist was dying away. He was contrary wise moving towards a new kind of harsh realism.

Stevenson had begun his career as an aesthetic youth, as an essayist on whom the search for the precious phrase was in itself an ideal, the "sedulous ape" of other writers. But since he had removed from England to the South Seas his novels had discovered a new world of material. The figure in the Sergeant portrait painted in Bournemouth is an aesthete. It

32. Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione", in *The Renaissance*, London, 1961, 142

33. Quoted in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, ed. Janet Adam Smith, London, 1948, 18.

34. *Ibid.*

was an image that many of his friends, such as Sydney Colvin, could never displace. In that useful phrase of Paul Barolsky, Stevenson was “a domesticated aesthete”.³⁵

Wolfgang Iser has observed that:

To the extent that art contradicts experience and so seeks to transcend pedestrian reality, Pater and Stevenson stand together. Stevenson put his ideas into practice by distancing himself from the world of the merely factual. His fairy-tales and even his detective stories were permeated by a touch of otherworldliness, and therefore the world he created was in no way a “resemblance to life”, but symbolised the requisite distance from life.³⁶

Though fairy tales and detective stories are clumsy translations of fantasies and romances of crime, which would be adequate for some of Stevenson’s early work, this suggests that his grasp on reality was remote and aesthetic, one which does not adequately describe the whole range of his fictional and non-fictional work by any means. But this was the Jekyll-side of Stevenson: the side of the romancer of his youth. There was also the Hyde-side, the side that sought out new experiences that mere aestheticism had never thought of. By 1894 Stevenson can no longer be said to stand with Pater as one.

His decision to go to America in pursuit of Fanny van de Grift was a momentous one. The key event in his life, the true and literal rite of passage, was his crossing of the Atlantic and the Plains. He called himself an amateur emigrant, but even that was not enough to prevent his family from having the account suppressed for some years. Steerage was no way for a British gentleman to travel: some conventions, however, were now behind him. He was prepared, as well, to marry his divorced love. But this transition brought Stevenson, who since childhood relished tales of low life, banditry and the high seas, into contact with that kind of existence for the first time in his life. He found, first in America, later in Samoa, a new kind of life and this was rapidly reflected in his books. This new mood can be traced through the books written with Lloyd Osbourne (often neglected by modern readers), and in the last novels. One has only to contrast that macabre comic book *The Wrong Box* with the lighthearted *New Arabian Nights* to see that something new, caustic and realistic had come into his outlook.

35. Paul Barolsky, *Walter Pater's Renaissance*, London, 1987, 63 ff.

36. Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment*, trans. D.H. Wilson, Cambridge, 1987, 60.

Stevenson left *Weir of Hermiston* unfinished at his death: a suggestion to some that he was seeing his essential Scottish material in a new light. Certainly Henry James felt this. James, however, almost alone of his old friends in Europe, had maintained an interest in the nature of Stevenson's true development as an artist. His interest is significant. As Janet Adam Smith's book indicates, he viewed Stevenson (as their private letters, and his published appreciations demonstrate) with high seriousness, the high seriousness of which only Henry James was capable.

However, I think Stevenson's new work would have drawn on the clash between Empire and Colony — the local politics of Samoa, with the interventions of the British Germans and Americans, would alone have assured that. But there was more. In a letter of 1890 to James he mentions in passing a visit they had from certain Mr Baker of Tonga:

He is a great man here; he is accused of theft, rape, judicial murder, private poisoning, abortion, misappropriation of public moneys — oddly enough, not forgery, nor arson: you would be amused if you knew how thick the accusations fly in this South Sea world.³⁷

This was the world of *The Wrecker*, *The Ebb-Tide*, *The Beach of Falesá*, and other stories. It will be recalled that James considered the writing of *The Beach of Falesá* "an art brought to perfection". This was a world far removed from that of Henry James, but material which would soon find another context, in the novels of Joseph Conrad, of whom James remarked that no-one knew what he knew — knew it, that is, for literary use. Stevenson did.

Just what could be made of such material was indicated the very next year with the appearance of *Almayer's Folly*, a novel of European sensibility (begun, we may recall, on the fly leaf of a copy of *Madame Bovary*), of European sensibility encountering with a realistic pen, new ways of life, new codes of honour, new concepts of culture; witnessing to the barbarities of Arab commerce, and the ambitions of British imperialism, the degradation of the natives among the islands of the southern seas.

But with Joseph Conrad (not so much the heir to Stevenson, as the novelist Stevenson himself would have become), we pass completely out of the 1890s, in manner and spirit; away from Pater and Moore, and into the perplexing ambiguities of the new century; where the moral universe shifted from refined aesthetic joy and the elegant contrivances of prose,

37. Janet Adam Smith, 193.

towards unplumbed depths of fear and hate, and the unspeakable agonies of the inarticulate; from the cloistered calm of an Oxford college to the squalor of death along the sea-boards of the Orient. Dainty (that favourite word of Pater's), dainty nineteenth-century Beauty had finally succumbed, to the brute Beast of the twentieth.

THE INFLUENCE OF WALTER PATER IN *DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE* AND *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

ANS KABEL

Locked up in their cabinet, struggling with their conscience, uttering agonizing cries that frighten the servants in the house, that is how Dr Jekyll in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Dorian in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* meet their deaths. How they die, remains a mystery to all of us, because when the servants find them, their bodies have been changed: Dr Jekyll has changed into Mr Hyde and the young and beautiful Dorian has become “withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage”.¹ This transformation of their bodies which can be linked to the notion of good and evil (Beauty and Beast), is a fascinating phenomenon and creates suspense. Stevenson wrote his *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1886 and Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1891. In 1885 Walter Pater wrote *Marius the Epicurean*, a historical and autobiographical novel. In this paper I will argue that the influence of the latter work cannot only be traced in Wilde, a fact which has been noted before, but also in Stevenson.

Marius the Epicurean is the story “of a boy growing into manhood in the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, seeking for some truth or firm principle among various current philosophies”.² One of Marius’ most essential thoughts about life can be found in the stories by Stevenson and Wilde. I refer here to his revolutionary idea in Chapter XVI, “On Second Thoughts”, where Marius discovers that

He has a strong apprehension, also, of the beauty of the visible things around him; their fading, momentary, graces and attractions. His natural susceptibility in this direction, enlarged by experience, seems to demand of him an almost exclusive pre-occupation with

1. Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works*, Collins Classics, 1994, 159 (all quotations are taken from this edition).

2. Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, ed. Michael Levey, Penguin, 1985, 7; all quotations are taken from this edition.

the *aspects* of things; with their aesthetic character, as it is called — their revelations to the eye and the imagination: not so much because those aspects of them yield him the largest amount of enjoyment, as because to be occupied, in this way, with the aesthetic or imaginative side of things, is to be in real contact with those elements of his own nature, and of theirs, which, for him at least, are matter of the most real kind of apprehension.

This idea is revolutionary in the sense that Marius says that “in the prosecution of this love of beauty, he claims an entire personal liberty, liberty of heart and mind, liberty, above all, from what may seem conventional answers to first questions” (187).

Dr Jekyll’s and Dorian’s transformation of body was, as I will explain later, caused by their search to get into real contact with the elemental qualities of their nature. Their search was revolutionary in that time as can be illustrated, for instance, by the following words of Stevenson’s friend and correspondent A.J.Symonds:

“You see I am trembling under the magician’s wand of your fancy, and rebelling against it with the scorn of a soul that hates to be contaminated with the mere picture of victorious evil. Our only chance seems to me to be to maintain, against all appearances, that evil can never in no way be victorious.”³

Symonds refers here to the character of Mr Hyde. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was also condemned by many critics of the time who refer to the immoral character of the novel.⁴

Stevenson and Wilde were inspired by different motives to transcend reality in their stories. Although in Stevenson’s case I could not find an openly avowed influence of Pater as is the case with Wilde,⁵ I think the thoughts expressed in Chapter XVI of *Marius the Epicurean* mentioned above, show keywords essential to Stevenson and Wilde and other artists of that time trying to break away from the Victorian code of behaviour as to what is good and what is evil.

3. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories*, ed. Jenni Calder, Penguin, 1979, 10 (all quotations from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* are taken from this edition).

4. Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*, New York and London, 1992, 48.

5. *Ibid.*, 47.

What is essential in Marius' life is his capacity to rely on his senses when new experiences come up. This is partly his nature, as we may infer from the description of his boyhood in which he is said to have "lived much in the realm of imagination" (49). It is also partly the pagan world he lives in with its decorous, mysterious cults in the temples (49). Pater gives us in the first few chapters a thorough description of the pagan rites, which could be seen as an explanation to the reader for Marius' susceptibility to sensuous influences around him. These pagan rites emphasize the care of the body and the use of the senses. They show the "sacramental character" of the care for physical health and the feeling there was of a "moral or spiritual profit in physical health" (51). One of the first lessons Marius learned from a young priest in a temple was about the capacity of the eye, which is seen by this priest as a "determining influence of life" (53). In addition to this pagan lesson, we find the Neo-Platonic theme that the eye "must be 'made perfect by the love of visible beauty'" (53). Pater quotes here the words of "a poet who came long after". This is one example of the two levels on which this book has to be read: on the story-level of Marius and his time and on the level of Pater's ideas about the various ways people have walked through life from Marius' time up to his own. As he draws conclusions that were not conventional in that time, he carefully prepares us for Marius' reflections such as: "Our knowledge is limited to what we feel, he reflected: we need no proof that we feel" (113). And in Chapter XXIV, suggestively called by Pater "A Conversation Not Imaginary", there is a discourse on philosophy by a younger and older student, leaving Marius with the conclusion that there is no such thing as one philosophy and that life is too short to go on looking for the one way. Pater uses here a metaphor for life to be experienced by the senses: "My friend! Be not so lengthy in preparing the banquet, lest you die of hunger!" (267).

To draw conclusions such as Pater did with "Our knowledge is limited to what we feel ... we need no proof that we feel" (113) needs a careful argumentation to show his integrity to his readers. However, Pater was not alone in the atmosphere he created with his ideas. According to Jennifer Uglow in her Introduction to her edition of Pater's *Essays on Literature and Art*,⁶ Pater's ideas belong partly to the English tradition of the theological Oxford Movement in his attraction to Catholicism, "faith in the spiritual values of a liberal education" and "a sensitive cultured temperament — and a certain academic elitism". And partly they belong to the Romantic tradition with its stress on intuition and imagination,

6. Walter Pater, *Essays on Literature and Art*, ed. Jennifer Uglow, London, 1973, vii-xxiii.

which she calls “the antecedents of Pater’s theory” (ix). Pater was also a precursor to the period of the 1890s. His investigating, dialectic approach to important philosophies in history was a characteristic of that period. Holbrook Jackson in his Introduction to *The 1890s* describes the atmosphere of that decade as follows:

Life aroused curiosity. People became enthusiastic about the way it should be used. And in proof of sincerity there were opinionated battles — most of them inconclusive.... It was the old battle between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, materialistic and mystic, Christian and Pagan, but fought from a great variety of positions.⁷

The themes of “imagination” and “curiosity” in Pater are important elements in Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Stevenson was “unrestrainedly imaginative” and in his youth influenced by stories “told by his nurse, steeped in uncompromising Calvinistic beliefs in sin and coloured by a vivid folk apprehension of the devil, and the stories he told himself, often a strange mixture of both”.⁸ In his ideals about writing fiction he advocates the use of imagination. He believed in “a reality that he argues is stronger and more worthwhile than the naturalism of the Zola school. A transcendent reality was what he was after”.⁹ In the reality of the realistic and naturalistic novels of his time the imagination does not play a role. Stevenson was thus unconventional in his imaginative approach to reality.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is an imaginative presentation of Stevenson’s reality, which is dramatized in such a manner as to create a breathtaking effect on first reading. He follows one of Pater’s ideas in that he presents reality as a revelation to the eye and the imagination. Stevenson’s Calvinistic upbringing influenced his way of looking at life and the struggle Dr Jekyll has with his evil side, Mr Hyde, is Stevenson’s translation of the Calvinistic “terror of sin, of total evil”.¹⁰ In his investigation of this new theme of evil Stevenson makes Dr Jekyll discover by chance a remedy to change from Jekyll into Hyde. The separation of the good and evil elements in a person clashes with Marius’ idea that knowledge can be felt and that what is good and evil can be judged by relying on one’s senses. However, Jekyll’s sensations when he transforms

7. Holbrook Jackson, *The 1890s* (1913), London, 1988, 13.

8. Jenni Calder’s Introduction to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 8.

9. *Ibid.*, 9.

10. *Ibid.*, 8.

into Hyde are described in terms of “indescribably new”, “a solution of the bonds of obligation”, “sold a slave to my original evil”, “exulting in the freshness of these sensations”. When he sees his “evil” stature in the mirror he is conscious of a “leap of welcome” (83-84). These sensations could be compared to what Marius meant by being “in real contact with those elements of his own nature”. Moreover, there is Jekyll’s defence in his testament that he had to effectuate this separation because he “was radically both” (82). Marius does not advocate the indulgence in evil but in the aesthetic character of the aspect of things (Chapter XVI). However, Stevenson’s approach is from a Calvinistic background and thus he struggles with the strict Calvinistic beliefs in good and evil.

Peter Stonely, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Collected Shorter Fiction* says that “Jekyll/Hyde anticipates Dorian Grey [sic]”.¹¹ He mentions these books together here in relation to their treatment of the social problem of evil. I agree with him that Stevenson and Wilde connect evil with secretive behaviour and underworld places. However, the atmosphere in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is thoroughly dark and that is not the case in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* where only some parts are in the dark.

In Stevenson’s story the darkness is the Calvinistic terror for the world of sin made visual by the dark back streets of London. This also accounts for the dry and greyish description of the characters, and the big, gloomy houses they live in. The way Mr Utterson is described in the book is an example of that Calvinistic atmosphere. Thus we read about his envy at other people’s pleasures involved in their misdeeds (29), “a volume of some dry divinity on his reading-desk” and Mr Utterson as “a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest” (35). Another aspect in the darkness of the atmosphere is that of the physical appearance of Mr Hyde. He is hairy and his appearance frightens everyone. Words like “caged” (90) and “ape-like tricks” (96), the “lower elements in my soul” (83), all referring to Mr Hyde, introduce into the darkness of fiction the primitive man of Darwin’s theories, and of the stories of colonialism.

In contrast, Oscar Wilde’s story is a colourful one, abundant in luxurious pleasures, visualising the decadent London society of the 1890s. Only in his morality do we come across the dark, secretive atmosphere of Stevenson’s tale. The light atmosphere is exemplified in the decadent behaviour of Lord Henry and Dorian Gray. Their dedication to the beautiful and decadent side of life is often presented in a descriptive way.

11. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Collected Shorter Fiction*, ed. Peter Stonely, London, 1991, xiii.

Chapter XI, for instance, reads as an elaborate enumeration of Dorian's fascination for decadence in particular modes of dressing, in the study of perfumes, of jewels, in his devotion to music, and his interest in the East. Lord Henry is decadent in his posing as a dandy, in his epigrams and in his paradoxes. He is the static character who presents the ideas in the book. He does not change and moreover, he believes that Dorian will never change to him. When Dorian tells him: "I am a little changed already" (155), Lord Henry fails to understand.

Lord Henry's ideas show the influence of two persons in this book. In his use of decadence, Wilde was influenced by J.K. Huysmans' decadent novel *A Rebours*. The Yellow Book Dorian becomes enslaved to and which figures prominently in Chapter XI, was "partly suggested" by *A Rebours*.¹² Wilde was also influenced by the works of Walter Pater. Lord Henry reveals ideas Marius reflected upon in *Marius the Epicurean*. The relation between care of the senses and the soul comes to the fore in one of the many paradoxical sayings of Lord Henry: "Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul" (30). What Marius says about knowledge related to feeling could be compared to Lord Henry's statement about a new Hedonism that "was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience" (99). These examples confirm what Richard Ellmann said of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

Pater situated his story in imperial Rome during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and so left it open for someone else to provide a more modern and English instance. This was exactly what Wilde tried to furnish in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first published four years after *Marius* and part of the same cycle of novels.¹³

Dorian and Basil Hallward, the painter, are the two important characters in this book who act out some of Lord Henry's ideas. It is in the difficulties they face when following these ideas that the dark, secretive part of the story comes in.

The picture of Dorian presents the idea of the dedication in life to youth and beauty. It is Dorian's wish always to remain as pure, young and beautiful as he is in the picture his friend Basil Hallward made of him. The picture is also the story of the artist Basil, who worshipped Dorian as "the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us

12. Beckson, 47.

13. Richard Ellmann, "The Uses of Decadence", in *a long the riverrun: Selected Essays*, London, 1990, 5.

artists like an exquisite dream" (89). Dorian's and Basil's thoughts are preoccupied with ideas that can be found in Marius when he reflects on "the beauty of visible things around him; their fading, momentary, graces and attractions" (referred to at the beginning of this essay). However, in Wilde's story, this dedication later causes their fear in life. Basil fears that his worship of Dorian's beauty will be revealed in the picture; Dorian fears that the exposure in the picture of his evil deeds and his fading beauty will be known to others. Here is also the relation with Dr Jekyll's fears.

It seems as if Wilde plays in his book with the ideas he presents. He first lets Dorian become enslaved to an aesthetic and decadent way of life under the influence of Lord Henry's ideas and in particular under the influence of the Yellow Book Lord Henry presents Dorian with. Yet, later on in the novel, after Dorian has killed Basil, Dorian blames Lord Henry for ever having given him that book:

"Yet you poisoned me with a book once. I should not forgive that. Harry, promise me that you will never lend that book to anyone. It does harm." (155)

Lord Henry laughs at this and claims: "Art has no influence upon action" (156). Lord Henry again reacts here as the preacher of a decadent lifestyle and does not see that Dorian has become its victim.

Another example of Wilde's ambiguous feelings about Dorian's life style is in the moral ending of the book. "Wilde probably thought that the ending would satisfy the most demanding guardians of public morals and insure his success".¹⁴ However, it is not only in the moral ending that Oscar Wilde is conventional in his moral code. Dorian's reaction to the perfection of the picture, quite at the beginning of the book, already foreshadows its fatality: "When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself." When Basil wants to stab the picture with a knife because he cannot bear seeing Dorian unhappy over it, Dorian cries out: "It would be murder!" (34). Moreover, the moral pressure Basil puts upon Dorian throughout the book is eventually stronger than Lord Henry's influence. These two important elements in the book, together with the moral ending, could indicate that Wilde suggests from the start the risks a decadent life at that time brought with it. When one thinks of the trials of Oscar Wilde a few years later, the word tragic is even more appropriate.

Marius' death did not occur in the violent way as it came to Dr Jekyll and Dorian. He died after a life of investigating all kinds of philosophical

14. Beckson, 48.

ideas. He chose to sacrifice his life for the life of his young friend and fellow-prisoner, Cornelius. With this death Marius expressed what he highly valued in his life. He found that all men have to suffer in life and that the *sympathy* one has for the pain in others, the pain in the world, gives meaning to life (274-75): "The future will be with those who have the most of it; ..." (274). Marius' sympathy for the suffering of Cornelius and his feeling that through the new life he gives to Cornelius he "seemed to link himself to the generations to come in the world he was leaving" (295), resign him peacefully to his death. In his last moments he is surrounded by people praying for him and revering him as a kind of martyr. The sacramental care for his dying body by these Christian people is reminiscent of the cults he saw in the temples of his youth. It is the "care for his very body — that dear sister and companion of his soul" (295-96) that he has always cherished.

The atmosphere in the book changes after Marius has decided to sacrifice his life for Cornelius. From the bright urban atmosphere in Rome the story moves towards a quiet and peaceful one. Partly this is because Marius has come to the end of his pilgrimage. Partly because there is a difference between the young, energetic Marius, curious to know everything about life, and the Marius at the end of the book who resigns peacefully to sacrificing that life. One would have expected him to do great things in life with all the knowledge he had gathered. Still, it is a moving end, and it is clear that Marius has at last found the rest and happiness he could not find on his pilgrimage.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there is also a change in atmosphere: the change from the light atmosphere of the beginning to a darker one at the end. It reminds us of what Huysmans wrote about *A Rebours* twenty years after its first publication. By that time he has become a Benedictine monk and he now finds that he did not understand much of himself in the period of the novel's composition.¹⁵ However, he did recognize he was laying the foundation for his later life dedicated to God. Oscar Wilde was converted to Catholicism at the end of his life as well. Parts of Walter Pater's book are about Marius' attraction for the liturgical spirit in the Catholic church. It seems that Catholicism had a certain attraction for these writers.

To conclude, the promotion to rely on your senses in judging what is good and evil is an essential theme in Walter Pater's book. It is a theme that Stevenson and Wilde experimented with in the two books discussed here. However, there is a difference in the presentation of Marius

15. J.K. Huysmans, "Préface écrite vingt ans après le roman", *A Rebours*, Paris, 1978, 45-59.

compared to that of Dr Jekyll and Dorian Gray. First of all, Marius' life ends in a harmonious death; he finds a balance between body and soul. The other two characters die because they neglected the role of the soul in their lives. Marius finds that balance in his death as a sacrifice. The other two characters hope to find it during their life-times. Marius' character is, for the greater part, presented as a means to ventilate ideas about life and thus he is more at a distance from the reader. This is also caused by Pater's technique of relating Marius' ideas to ideas that came after his death. In theory Marius is able to make a balanced choice in life. Like Marius, Dr Jekyll and Dorian are attracted to a sensuous approach to all elements in their lives. They experiment with the elements they felt to be undervalued in the conventional society around them. As they want to be part of that society, their actions are coloured by the reaction of their surroundings. In Marius' life the society he walks through is not a threat to him. His struggles with conventional ideas are mostly in his mind. Dr Jekyll's and Dorian's characters are presentations of an enslaving indulgence in their unconventional lives. In Dr Jekyll this enslavement is caused by a suppression of the Mr Hyde elements in him. Dorian is by nature susceptible to beautiful things and especially to his own beauty and youth, but his character misses the strength not to become a victim of this susceptibility. Dr Jekyll and Dorian are more lively characters and less passively contemplative than Marius. Though their behaviour is immoral in view of the crimes they committed, they are convincing in their search for a recognition of their feelings, unconventional at that time.

Pater gives a careful and balanced presentation of an aesthetic, imaginative approach to life with Marius as a character who could freely develop himself into a harmonious person. Stevenson and Wilde show in their stories how difficult this approach was when executed in a conventional society and by characters that were coloured by the moral conventions of their time. However, they prepared us for the less rigid look on morality that is possible in our century.

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DR JEKYLL, MR HYDE, AND COUNT DRACULA

DOUGLAS S. MACK

*The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.*

T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages"

This paper will seek to relate Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to the cultural contexts from which it emerged. In considering these contexts, let us begin by looking briefly at Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, another text from the final years of the nineteenth century. For successive generations, both *Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* have maintained a powerful hold over the popular imagination; and, as we shall see, that is not the only thing these two texts have in common.

At the beginning of *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker is undertaking a journey which leads him from London to Transylvania. The opening words of the novel are as follows:

3 May. Bistritz. — Left Munich at 8.35 p.m. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6.46, but train was an hour late. Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western of splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule.

We left in pretty good time, and came after nightfall to Klausenburgh.¹

1. Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, Oxford, 1983, 1. Further references appear in the text. I am grateful to Glennis Stephenson, my colleague at the University of Stirling, for encouraging my interest in *Dracula*, and for her illuminating comments on that text.

There is a strong sense here of crossing a significant border, of “leaving the West and entering the East”, of being taken “among the traditions of Turkish rule”. Things are different over the border, as we learn in the fifth paragraph of the novel. Harker is now firmly in the East.

I had to sit in the carriage for more than an hour before we began to move. It seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China? (*Dracula*, 2)

Two more paragraphs, and the train has brought Harker to another frontier.

It was on the dark side of twilight when we got to Bistritz, which is a very interesting old place. Being practically on the frontier — for the Borgo Pass leads from it into Bukovina — it has had a very stormy existence, and it certainly shows marks of it (*Dracula*, 3).

There are no trains over the Borgo Pass; and when Harker continues his journey over that frontier, he has to leave behind the modern world of the train (however Eastern and unpunctual); and he enters instead an ancient world of horse-drawn transport. What Harker undertakes, it begins to appear, is a journey from a modern, civilized, progressive, scientific present back to a past that is uncivilized, barbarous, dark, dangerous, threatening; to the territory of Count Dracula, in fact, whose castle in Transylvania is Harker’s destination.

Behind Harker’s journey towards the primitive terror, it is possible to see some of the concerns and obsessions that fascinated Europe in the final years of the nineteenth century. Darwin had brought forward the disturbing possibility that humanity is descended from the apes; and Count Dracula is, as it were, an incarnation of the ancestral beast that lurks behind and below human civilization. Another implication of Harker’s journey is to be found in Europe’s fear of reverse colonization. As the nineteenth century drew to a close the great European empires were at their height. But there was anxiety at the heart of empire. Would the colonized emerge from a Conradian Heart of Darkness, and threaten to subvert the European imperial centres? This, of course, is exactly what Count Dracula does when he repeats Harker’s journey in reverse, and emerges in London to seek to establish dominion there. In this context it is instructive to remember what Harker writes about Dracula’s homeland.

In the population of Transylvania there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the west; and Szekelys in the east and north. I am going among the latter, who claim to be descended from Attila and the Huns (*Dracula*, 2).

Fears of reverse colonialism are not far from the surface here. Attila and the Huns had been instrumental in overthrowing the Roman Empire: and now their descendant Dracula invades London, the heart and centre of the largest and most powerful of the modern European Empires.

Another perspective is provided by those *fin-de-siècle* ideas and concerns that we can label as Freudian. In this context we can see Count Dracula as the primeval id, threatening to overpower the civilized ego. Needless to say, this link with the id is why the vampire attack has such powerfully sexual overtones in Stoker's novel.

How then is the threat to civilization to be combatted? In *Dracula*, the vampire is opposed and eventually overcome by Van Helsing and his associates, a group representative of the resources of the four corners of the *civilized* world. In their battle against the primitive terror, Van Helsing and his allies fight fire with fire, using weapons from Dracula's own ancient world — weapons like the power that can be imposed through garlic over the vampire. Likewise, the sexual resonances of Dracula's attacks are matched by the sexual resonances of one of the main weapons of the Count's opponents — the stake driven by a male through the heart of the female vampire Laura.

Nevertheless, although they fight fire with fire, the members of Van Helsing's company are quintessentially creatures of the modern world, disciples of science, apostles of progress. They travel by train, not by horse and cart; Dr Seward keeps his diary by phonograph; Mina Harker uses a typewriter; they send messages by telegraph. These latest devices of the modern world are in a sense the defining features of what Van Helsing and his allies stand for. If we translate their gadgets into the baubles of the *fin de siècle*, we can imagine Mina and the others hard at work at their PCs, jetting around the world when the need arises, and sending e-mail to all and sundry.

In the end the laptops and cellular phones of Van Helsing and company emerge victorious; and the potent, primitive, dangerous old magic of the vampires is defeated. In the end, Attila the Hun is driven back. Civilization is saved by the forces of enlightenment and science. But it is a damned close-run thing.

If we turn from *Dracula* to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, many things seem familiar. In particular, it is clear that Mr Hyde represents forces of the kind that Count Dracula embodies in Stoker's text. Thus Hyde is the Darwinian ape within Jekyll, and within humanity. Jekyll's servant Poole, describing Hyde, speaks of the "masked thing like a monkey" that "jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet".² Similarly, Jekyll in his "Statement of the Case" describes an unexpected emergence of the ape-like Hyde.

Some two months before the murder of Sir Danvers, I had been out for one of my adventures, had returned at a late hour, and woke the next day in bed with somewhat odd sensations. It was in vain I looked about me; in vain I saw the decent furniture and tall proportions of my room in the square; in vain that I recognised the pattern of the bed curtains and the design of the mahogany frame; something still kept insisting that I was not where I was, that I had not wakened where I seemed to be, but in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde. I smiled to myself, and, in my psychological way, began lazily to inquire into the elements of this illusion, occasionally, even as I did so, dropping back into a comfortable morning doze. I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell upon my hand. Now, the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde (*Jekyll*, 66-67).

Likewise, the threat of the subversive id manifests itself in what Jekyll calls his "undignified" pleasures. Jekyll puts it in this way.

Even at that time, I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study. I would still be merrily disposed at times; and as my pleasures were (to say the least) undignified, and I was not only well known and highly considered, but growing towards the elderly man, this incoherency of my life was daily growing more unwelcome (*Jekyll*, 64).

2. Robert Louis Stevenson, "*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*" and "*Weir of Hermiston*", Oxford, 1987, 47 (hereafter referred to as *Jekyll*).

Jekyll's undignified pleasures are no doubt sexual in nature; very possibly they involve recourse to prostitution. At all events, they are clearly manifestations of the power of the id to subvert and hinder the purposes of the ego.

It is evident, then, that many of the *fin-de-siècle* concerns of *Dracula* are also to be found in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Nevertheless, there are differences between the two texts. As we have seen, science is viewed very positively in *Dracula*: it animates the forces through which the primitive terror can be faced and overcome. In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, on the other hand, Jekyll's scientific experiments do not provide salvation. Rather, the experiments supply the means through which the primitive terror is unleashed. Here, science is not the cure. It is part of the problem.

Why should there be this important difference between two texts that have so much in common? At the beginning of the present paper, I proposed to look at the cultural contexts from which *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* emerged. "Contexts", not "context". The plural is important, because *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* needs to be considered not only as a *fin-de-siècle* text, but also as a Scottish text. Robert Crawford's seminal book *Devolving English Literature* has demonstrated that we need to distrust the assumption that the cultural tradition behind British literature is a unified one, based on one centre, London.³ Crawford has shown that the term "British" needs to be historicized and deconstructed; and he has shown that Edinburgh (to take one particularly important example) needs to be taken seriously as a site for cultural production that is different from, and alternative to, London.

Adopting the spirit of Crawford's argument, I wish to move on to consider *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as a product of the cultural context provided by Edinburgh. It might be objected that *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is set in London, not Edinburgh; and of course this is true. Nevertheless, *Hamlet* belongs to English literature, not Danish literature, even though it is set in Denmark; and I hope to show that *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is intensely Scottish in its preoccupations, in spite of its London setting.

It will be remembered that Dr Jekyll conducts his experiments in a laboratory which had in former days been used as a dissecting theatre. We read:

It was late in the afternoon, when Mr Utterson found his way to Dr Jekyll's door, where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently known as the

3. Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, Oxford, 1992.

laboratory or the dissecting rooms. The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden. It was the first time that the lawyer had been received in that part of his friend's quarters; and he eyed the dingy windowless structure with curiosity, and gazed round with a distasteful sense of strangeness as he crossed the theatre, once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus (*Jekyll*, 30).

In the Scottish cultural context in which Stevenson grew up, mention of a dissecting theatre immediately brings to mind the Edinburgh of the 1820s. In that place and at that time, the investigation of human anatomy by means of public dissection was a high-profile activity associated with the renowned medical school of the University of Edinburgh. The medical researchers of early-nineteenth-century Edinburgh advanced scientific knowledge, and played a significant part in the relief of human suffering. For example, if we are not particularly happy at the thought of being operated on without anaesthetic, we should remember with gratitude Sir James Young Simpson's pioneering use of chloroform in Edinburgh in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Paving the way for modern anaesthetics was only one of the real and substantial achievements of early-nineteenth-century Edinburgh's medical research. But that research activity also had a darker side. To perform their function, dissecting theatres need a steady supply of human bodies. This problem presented itself in the Edinburgh of the 1820s; and as a result, new graves would be robbed by night, and the bodies sold to disectors like the famous Dr Robert Knox. Knox asked his suppliers no inconvenient questions; and two of his associates, the notorious Burke and Hare, began to murder tramps and prostitutes in order to keep up the flow of bodies for Knox's dissecting theatre. The victims of Burke and Hare included the prostitute Mary Paterson, whose body, duly sold for dissection, was recognized in the theatre by some of Knox's assistants and students, her former customers. The fate of Mary Paterson forms the basis of Stevenson's short story "The Body Snatcher", in which a medical student, Fettes, obtains a body for an "extramural teacher of anatomy", a character clearly based on Knox. However, Fettes quickly realizes he has purchased the body of one Jane Galbraith, whom "he had jested with the

day before". This phrase has been aptly described by Owen Dudley Edwards as one of Stevenson's "happiest euphemisms".⁴

In the Scottish cultural context, that is to say, the science of the dissecting theatre is a problematic, morally complex area: advancing knowledge and understanding, but also involving violence, death, and prostitution. Just like Dr Jekyll's scientific experiments, in fact. Examination of the complex intertwining of good and evil, within both human nature and human affairs, is a well-established and much-loved Scottish obsession. It is an obsession that provides Stevenson's text with its essential substance.

This is what Jekyll says about himself, in the text:

Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering (*Jekyll*, 60).

A few pages further on, Jekyll comments further on the intertwining of good and evil in his nature.

Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair (*Jekyll*, 64).

The evil of Hyde is an essential part of Jekyll; we all have the beast within. Clearly, this links with Darwin, at the *fin-de-siècle*; but it also links with one of the central insights of Scottish (as indeed of Dutch) Calvinism. As a Scot giving this paper in Leiden, I cannot but be conscious of the deep cultural and historical bonds between Scotland and the Netherlands. These bonds, of course, are memorably celebrated by Stevenson in the Leiden scenes in *Catrina*, that complex exploration of the intertwining of, and interaction between, the Calvinist and anti-Calvinist strands of Scottish culture.

That thought may serve to introduce another element of the Scottishness of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Hyde is Jekyll's double; and doubleness, the splitting and division of the personality, provides Scottish literature with one of its recurring obsessions. Hogg's *Private Memoirs*

4. See R.L. Stevenson, *The Scottish Stories and Essays*, ed. Kenneth Gelder, Edinburgh, 1989, 81-98, 284-85.

Confessions of a Justified Sinner is one obvious example; and it will also be remembered that the titlepage of Scott's *Waverley* carries the quotation "Under which King, Bezonian? speak, or die!". Edward Waverley has to decide whether he is Whig or Tory, Hanoverian or Jacobite; and he has the devil of a job making up his mind. Since our union with England in 1707, we Scots likewise have had the devil of a job making up our minds about the nature of our national identity. For complex reasons into which we need not enter at present, the playing card the nine of diamonds is called "the Curse of Scotland".⁵ I would like to suggest, however, that the real Curse of Scotland is our habit of disagreeing furiously among ourselves about almost everything. One of the very few things that we *can* agree upon relates to one aspect of the question of national identity: whatever else we may or may not be, we are wholly certain we are not English. Nevertheless, we will answer, with varying degrees of bewilderment, aggression, and uncertainty, to both "British" and "Scottish". For many years, most of our public buildings have flown two flags: the union jack for Britain, and the saltire for Scotland. "Under which King?" Perhaps, some day, we shall find an answer. Until that happy day we are doomed to be double; and doomed to be fascinated by literary and other explorations of the two-in-one.

The point of this essay has been to suggest that *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is likewise double. Clearly, it is a text that emerges from the cultural context of the European *fin-de-siècle*; but it is equally a text that emerges from the cultural context of the Scottish tradition. It is double; and I should like to suggest that the particular nature and fascination of this text derives from its interweaving of the concerns of its two cultural contexts.

5. A detailed discussion of this matter is to be found in the *Scottish National Dictionary*, under "Curse of Scotland".

STEVENSON'S MONKEY-BUSINESS: *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE*

TIM YOUNGS

Like all texts, Robert Louis Stevenson's story of Jekyll and Hyde must be seen in its historical and social context.¹ We must consider the decade in which it was written, which has been described as one in which "Accepted institutions and accepted philosophies were being sharply challenged by changes in economic conditions".² And, since part of the horror of Hyde is his ape-like appearance, then we must try to recover something of the impressions that such imagery evoked for readers at the time. When Hyde is described as manifesting "ape-like fury" in trampling to death Sir Danvers Carew, Member of Parliament,³ then plainly something much more interesting is going on than a simple exposition of the struggle between good and evil, or of the return of the sexually repressed, or of the anti-social conduct of a secret alcoholic, all of which interpretations are commonly advanced.

Of these three broad types of reading, the first (the battle between good and evil) is typified by Henry James's remark that *Jekyll and Hyde* "deals with the relation of the baser parts of man to his nobler, of the capacity for evil that exists in the most generous natures; and it expresses these things in a fable which is a most wonderfully happy invention".⁴

1. Of course I am sensitive to the urging of Douglas Mack and others that this context include Stevenson's Scottishness, which to some degree it must, but there is a danger with a writer such as Stevenson of trying somehow to filter out all other cultural and social influences upon him. *Jekyll and Hyde* was written in Bournemouth.

2. Helen Merrell Lynd, *England in the Eighteen-Eighities: Toward a Social Basis for Freedom* (1945), London, 1968, 6.

3. Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Merry Men and Other Tales*, London, 1925, 19 (all further references to this text will be given parenthetically).

4. Henry James, "Robert Louis Stevenson", in *Henry James, The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Roger Gard, London, 1987, 263. The essay was first

The trouble with this kind of line, of course, is that it ignores the particular circumstances which may have given rise to the tale, which in turn may reflect them. The second interpretation, that of sexual repression, has been voiced more recently by, among others, Elaine Showalter, who argues that the text "can most persuasively be read as a fable of *fin-de-siècle* homosexual panic, the discovery and resistance of the homosexual self".⁵ The problem with this is that any reading of *Jekyll and Hyde* as a fable of something immediately becomes unpersuasive because it reduces to a dichotomy the multitude of unruly elements which Stevenson and Jekyll themselves are striving to express and manage. For instance, if Hyde's killing of Carew "both strikes at a father figure and suggests a male prostitute mugging a client on the docks",⁶ why has Hyde not struck at the more obvious father figure, why does he not blackmail the MP just as he is assumed by Enfield to be blackmailing Jekyll, and why his *ape-like* fury? However, while Showalter neglects some crucial aspects of *Jekyll and Hyde*, she does provide some impressive detail for her argument and uncovers some concerns which have too often been shamefully overlooked. The following discussion will, I hope, be seen to complement Showalter's; I certainly do not think the two are mutually exclusive. The third type of reading, criticism of the story as a study in alcoholism, is deeply uninteresting and misses just about everything that is significant in the narrative.

Stevenson's tale was published just two years after the 1884 Reform Act, whose extension of the franchise

gave dramatic political form to the wider cultural and social democratisation which confronted the professional classes with a deeply disturbing problem of social identity, as the boundaries between the lower bourgeoisie and their inferiors became increasingly blurred.⁷

The Reform Act had been preceded by increasing agitation from and on behalf of the disenfranchised. Unrest did not cease with the passing of the Act. There were riots in Trafalgar Square in the year of *Jekyll and Hyde*'s

published in *Century Magazine* (April 1888).

5. Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, New York, 1990, 107.

6. Showalter, 111.

7. Wim Neetens, *Writing and Democracy: Literature, Politics and Culture in Transition*, London, 1991, 37.

publication, most famously on 8 February, after a severe winter at which the depression of the mid- to late 1880s was at its height.⁸ Twenty thousand people, mostly unemployed dock and building workers, had gathered there. "All forms of property were assailed, all signs of wealth and privilege were attacked",⁹ writes one historian. Trouble continued for the next two days. In the following year, 1887, there were more demonstrations of the unemployed, culminating in the events of Bloody Sunday on 13 November.¹⁰ In 1888 there was the match girls' strike and in the year after that the great dock strike.¹¹ The 1880s, it has been said, were the years in which "the word 'unemployed', with reference to the surplus of casual labour in London especially, was coined".¹²

Gareth Stedman Jones has written fascinatingly of the "deep-rooted" and "comprehensive" social crisis of the 1880s, which he sees as consisting of four main elements: a severe cyclical depression; the structural decline of some of the older central industries; a severe shortage of working-class housing in the inner industrial perimeter; and the emergence of socialism and collectivism.¹³ According to Stedman Jones, "The cyclical depression of 1884-7 was both more prolonged and hit a far broader spectrum of occupations than the slumps of 1866 and 1879". It "greatly accentuated an already endemic condition of under-employment, and the hard winters that accompanied it intensified distress to chronic proportions". While the rich were generally able to preserve their physical separation from the poor, the "poor themselves were becoming more closely crammed together regardless of status or character", contributing to increased discontent among the "respectable working class" as the actual and metaphorical distance between them and the casual poor or "residuum" diminished. The residuum, writes Stedman Jones, was

8. I am inclined to agree with Helen Lynd when she counters some economic historians' claims that the situation between 1873 and 1896 did not formally constitute a depression by saying that "the period of falling prices, falling profits, increased foreign competition, contracting opportunities for investment, was increasingly felt ... as 'the great depression'" by those who lived through it (*England in the Eighteen-Eighties*, 113-14).

9. Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society*, Oxford, 1971, 291.

10. On these see Stedman Jones, 290-96.

11. There are several accounts of these events. A concise summary of them and of their context may be found in Lynd, ch. 7, "Organized Labor".

12. Neetens, 36. Neetens has Stedman Jones as his source.

13. Stedman Jones, 281.

considered dangerous not only because it was seen to be degenerate, but because “its very existence served to contaminate the classes immediately above it”. Stedman Jones observes that from 1883 newspapers and journals were “full of warnings of the necessity of immediate reform to ward off the impending revolutionary threat”. He cites as an example Samuel Smith’s warning in 1885 that “The proletariat may strangle us unless we teach it the same virtues which have elevated the other classes of society”.¹⁴

This was not of course the only kind of disruption in London at the time. On 24 January 1885 Fenians exploded three bombs simultaneously at Westminster Hall, the Houses of Parliament, and the Tower of London.¹⁵ (And it is well known that the Irish were often referred to as beasts, including apes.¹⁶) Abroad, events had recently heightened the sense of a crisis of authority, with the death of General Gordon in Khartoum also occurring in 1885.

Stedman Jones characterizes the predominant feeling of the 1880s among the intellectual and propertied classes as “not guilt but fear”, and observes that at this time accounts of “Outcast London” exhibited little sympathy or empathy:

The poor were presented as neglected, and even to a certain extent exploited ... But they did not emerge as objects of compassion. They were generally pictured as coarse, brutish, drunken, and immoral; through years of neglect and complacency they had become an ominous threat to civilization.¹⁷

Such attitudes accompanied the rise of the discourse of urban degeneration. It was seen as inevitable that as a result of their environment the poor would become “brutalized and sexually immoral”, seeking the alcoholic and salacious entertainments offered by pubs, music-halls, and prostitutes. Darwinian thinking encouraged the idea that this “adapting down” to one’s surroundings would have increasingly deleterious effects through the

14. *Ibid.*, 281-91, *passim*. Smith’s warning is from his article, “The Industrial Training of Destitute Children”, published in the *Contemporary Review* in January 1885.

15. Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*, New York, 1992, 18.

16. “The transformation of peasant Paddy into an ape-man or simianized Caliban was completed by the 1860s and 1870s” (L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, Newton Abbot, 1971, 2).

17. Stedman Jones, 285.

generations. However, in a significant twist, it was thought by some that improvements in medical science and sanitation, and beneficial legislation had controverted Darwinian laws, allowing the survival and growth of the unfit.¹⁸ This begs the question of what constitutes unfitness, and I think it is this question, involving notions of social, physical, and moral health, that makes so many of the popular texts of the late nineteenth century so fascinatingly troublesome. It is interesting that Stedman Jones characterizes as one of the middle-class responses to the social crisis of the 1880s that of the social imperialist. He quotes from Lord Brabazon's *Social Arrows* (1886):

Let the reader walk through the wretched streets ... of the Eastern or Southern districts of London ... should he be of average height, he will find himself a head taller than those around him; he will see on all sides pale faces, stunted figures, debilitated forms, narrow chests, and all the outward signs of a low vital power.¹⁹

The importance of this kind of image lies in its kinship with Hyde and with the Morlocks of Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895). David Punter sums up the various concerns at play here and what they have in common when, considering the "decadent Gothic" of the *fin-de-siècle*, of which he lists *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, and *Dracula* as the most potent examples; he writes:

they are all concerned in one way or another with the problem of degeneration, and thus of the essence of the human. They each pose, from very different angles, the same question, which can readily be seen as a question appropriate to an age of imperial decline: how much, they ask, can one lose — individually, socially, nationally — and still remain a man? One could put the question

18. This paragraph has drawn from Stedman Jones, 286-87. Stedman Jones illustrates the idea of the proliferation of the unfit, with reference to Arnold White's *The Problems of a Great City* (1887). Interestingly, Helen Lynd notes that "discoveries of the bacteriological basis of disease had begun to make people aware that, whatever the theory of individualism, health was not an individual matter" (Lynd, 147). One might say that Jekyll's condition too reflects this realization: his physical disturbance, while not contagious in the literal sense, invades the social body (Jekyll himself, the MP, the young girl, and so on) in a manner which symbolizes the larger threat of anti-social activity resulting from a diseased pursuit of self-gratification.

19. Stedman Jones, 308.

much more brutally: to what extent can one be “infected” and still remain British?²⁰

Punter’s reading is astute, for he also suggests, rightly, that “Hyde’s behaviour is an urban version of ‘going native’”.²¹ The crisis of social authority at home is linked closely with the question of imperial authority abroad, and it is hardly surprising, given the similarities of the language applied to subordinated social and racial groups, and the common identity of the controlling force in both cases, that a disturbance in one sphere should find its echoes in the other. But the notion of loss is more complex than Punter suggests. The idea of going native, whether in the forest or the city, is not a simple matter of degeneration but arises from the feeling that one’s elevated status has *already* entailed a loss of some vital quality. This sense, which is felt ever more intensely to the point of crisis, gives the theme of degeneration a complexity that ought not be overlooked. Degeneration and decadence are attractive because of the impression that refinement has itself meant a loss. Texts like *Jekyll and Hyde* debate the two conflicting types of loss: that of social status on the one hand and that of what we might call animal pleasures on the other. I dwell on this for a moment because it is important to see what Utterson and Jekyll have already lost before the tale begins. It is easy to forget that Utterson’s face “was never lighted by a smile”, that he is “cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse”; a bachelor who “was austere with himself” (3), whose “past was fairly blameless” and yet “was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many that he had come so near to doing, yet avoided” (15). He and the fifty year old Jekyll, the text implies, have lost a great deal precisely because of their undegenerate condition. We may not want to go so far as Andrew Lang, who says that “really Mr Hyde was more of a gentleman than the unctuous Dr Jekyll, with his ‘bedside manner’”,²² but nor should we forget that for many readers the gentlemen in this tale are not much more attractive than Hyde.

Utterson, the lawyer, may have trouble defining Hyde, who “gave an impression of deformity without any namable malformation” (13), but the impression is conveyed to the readers through racial and bestial terms.

20. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, London, 1980, 239-40. The relevant chapter in Punter’s book is Chapter 9: “Gothic and Decadence”, 239-67.

21. Punter, 241.

22. Andrew Lang, *Essays in Little*, London, 1891, 34.

Hyde has a “savage laugh” (13), he is, to Poole, a “masked thing like a monkey” (37), he plays, according to Jekyll, “apelike tricks” (61), and exhibits “apelike spite” (62); he displays, as we have seen, “ape-like fury” in killing Carew (19), he gives a screech “as of mere animal terror” (38), when cornered in the laboratory, and his hand is “lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair” (54). In the manuscript he is described as behaving with a “mixture of cowardice and savagery”.²³ He drinks “pleasure with bestial avidity” (53). It is true that he is also “pale and dwarfish” (13), but like Wells’s Morlocks in *The Time Machine* ten (or rather several hundred thousand) years later, the shock comes with the idea of a white ape, a creature which haunts popular texts with increasing menace at the *fin-de-siècle* as biological theories of degeneration combine with political fear of the socially repressed and a growing obsession with the psychological unconscious to effect agitated inspections of the subterranean and the interior.

Utterson thinks it “madness” or a “disgrace” (9) that in the event of Jekyll’s death or disappearance for longer than three months (9), Hyde should stand to inherit Jekyll’s “quarter of a million sterling” (20). Utterson, like his real-life counterparts, endeavours ever more frantically to maintain an identification of name with wealth, of social with financial status. Mr Enfield, too, relates how, after witnessing Hyde trampling on a young girl, he and the attendant doctor

told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or credit, we undertook that he should lose them (5).

In other words, a social death is resolved upon. The idea of credit in the dual sense of money and morality is prominent here. Hyde should be deprived of financial and social worth. Enfield goes on to recall how “we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child’s family”:

The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door? — whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts’s, drawn payable to

23. See William Veeder, “Collated Fractions of the Manuscript Drafts of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*”, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde after One Hundred Years*, eds William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch, Chicago, 1988, 22.

bearer, and signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that, if it was only genuine (6).

The suspicious Enfield accepts Hyde's offer to remain with him until the banks open in the morning and has him stay the night in his (Enfield's) chambers where the doctor and the girl's father also join them. In the morning, Enfield tells Utterson, "I gave in the cheque myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine" (6). Since Stevenson has gone to some trouble to record the details of the cheque and its encashment, it can hardly be irrelevant to notice that "By the middle of the 'eighties private banking was becoming almost extinct in England", as provincial bankers lost their influence to the London money market, and that:

Individual banks were losing any claim to independent status and stability. At the same time "personal character" ceased to be valid security for loans and overdrafts when the old local bankers, with their individual knowledge of all their clients, were replaced by distant directors whose lack of such knowledge compelled them to confine their loans within hard and fast rules. A structure of big finance was emerging along with the growth of big business.²⁴

The relevance of this lies in Enfield's (and the readers') doubt that personal character counts in the case just related. There is a strong feeling, even after Enfield has been reassured the cheque is genuine, that there can be no proper correspondence between Hyde, who is "really damnable", and Jekyll, who is "the very pink of the proprieties" (*Jekyll*, 6), leading Enfield to the conclusion that this must be a case of blackmail. The confusion over character and wealth thus becomes increasingly apparent the more Enfield and Utterson try to explain it. The more they rely on outmoded ideas of a match between physical wealth and personal quality, the less able they are to comprehend the actual state of affairs between them. This bafflement is expressed in Enfield's assured statement that "a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out of it with another man's cheque for close upon a hundred pounds" (6), which is, in fact, exactly what has happened. But then again it has not, for this is a fictional tale, and so the narrative turns away from,

24. Lynd, 44-45.

even as it acknowledges, the social movements which are throwing such comfortable beliefs into disarray.

At a time when the upper and upper-middle classes were losing both kinds of authority, social and moral, arguments over what constituted the “gentleman” raged. Stevenson’s tale feeds directly into those debates. We hear these anxieties in Poole’s plaintive cry to Utterson: “‘O, sir … do you think I do not know my master after twenty years?’” (36). We gauge the extent of this crisis by our knowledge that Poole indeed fails to recognize “that thing” (36), Hyde, as his master. Poole does not know his master after twenty years, just as many in society were no longer sure who their masters were. In a dramatic emblem of the upset to the supposed natural order of things, Poole, admittedly under Utterson’s direction, smashes his way with an axe into Jekyll’s theatre. That he does so fearing that Hyde, whom he knows to be in there, has murdered Jekyll is irrelevant to my argument: if anything, it reinforces my claim. My point is that the loyal servant violently forces his way into his master’s room because he does not know that Hyde and Jekyll are one. Stevenson does not hesitate to force home the social drama of this scene, describing Poole and Utterson as “The besiegers, appalled by their own riot” (39).

Jekyll’s statement tells us he was:

born ... to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future (48).

In this we must see him as representative of his class. When he proceeds to explain his fall, I am less interested in its particular aspect (which in the manuscript version is hinted much more heavily to be homosexuality,²⁵ and of course 1885 was the year of the Labouchere Amendment) than in the fact of his decline, which again I think ought to be taken as a reflection of the condition of many of his class. He recalls:

I concealed my pleasures; and ... when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me, and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life ... both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in

25. See Veeder, 34-35.

shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering (48).

It is easy to see why this passage has given rise to basic psychoanalytic readings of Jekyll's condition, sometimes allied to quasi-Marxist interpretations. It seems quite reasonable to infer that Jekyll's concealment of his pleasures involves both a social and psychological suppression of them. Pleasure is identified with the socially repressed and denial with the socially repressive.

In common with a growing number of texts of that time, social advantage and respectability are perceived to be a source of harmful negation. Jekyll's statement continues thus:

With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens (48-49).

This declaration needs careful reading. It is common for readers of the tale and for viewers of the films based on it to take Jekyll and Hyde as different personalities. This is perfectly understandable as Stevenson is caught in the paradox of physically projecting and thereby separating the conflicting components of the same person. (Jekyll refers to his consciousness of the "perennial war among my members" [48].) Such a reading might further be encouraged by Jekyll's reference to what he calls the "thorough and primitive duality of man" (49). But a careful perusal of his remarks soon makes clear that his crisis is brought about by his desire to separate the elements that are at war within him. His explanation of this is crucial and so I quote it at length:

I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was

unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together — that in the agonized womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated? (49)

The story of Jekyll is the story of his ultimate failure to separate and keep apart these elements. It is not, I think, particularly rewarding to read this failure in terms of morality, whether in a general Christian, specific Calvinist, or broad philosophical sense, or as an allusion to a particular vice. But if we look again at Stevenson's use of the word "polity" in the earlier quotation, then we surely have to review the passage against the social background. Whatever the dangers of taking Jekyll's statement at face value, the ideas that emerge from it seem to point unmistakably to the social changes and disturbances which were taking place at the time. Jekyll's statement can be taken as a grudging recognition that the polity, the state, consists of all its classes, and that to try to keep them apart will lead in fact to a destructive imbalance. It hardly gives a welcome embrace to democracy, but in that it is in keeping with several other exclamations of the era. The important point is that it acknowledges the futility of attempting to continue the suppression of the baser side of oneself, of what Jekyll calls the "lower elements in my soul" (50). (And here, as elsewhere, the socially respectable and privileged self stands for the social body at large.)

I have just mentioned the importance of accommodation, and it is accommodation in the literal and physical sense that further emphasizes the social side of the tale. Our introduction to Jekyll's house shows very clearly the threat to his social decline from either his own fall or from contamination by his surroundings:

Round the corner from the by-street there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate, and let in flats and chambers, to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers, and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fan-light, Mr Utterson stopped and knocked (14).

This evocation of corruption and decline is a more dramatic sign of threatened and changed identities than the transmutation of Jekyll into Hyde, which, after all, merely personifies the larger alteration already implicit in the narrative. The ancient, handsome houses are not just decayed and are not only divided, but are let to “all sorts and conditions of men” (14). The square shows in microcosm the changes that many saw were happening in late nineteenth-century society. The old families have moved out, unable any longer to afford their mansions. Their property has been split up to accommodate those from a “lower” station. Baseness, that is lowness and vulgarity, is what surrounds Jekyll’s now isolated house, whose tenuous hold on grandeur is apparent when we are told that it “*wore* a great *air* of wealth and comfort” (14, my italics) as if, like a garment, it might be shaken off or pulled away.

We can hardly have a more visible representation of the shifting power relations than this, unless it be the description of Hyde’s home in its “dismal quarter of Soho”, which to Utterson seems “like a district of some city in a nightmare” as

the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating-house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and two-penny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings. This was the home of Henry Jekyll’s favourite; of a man who was heir to a quarter of a million sterling (20).

This last sentence is surely meant as a more frightening incongruity than that which sees Hyde take over Jekyll’s body. The prospect of the gentleman’s fortune ending up in such a squalid environment was a greater horror for Stevenson’s well-to-do contemporaries than the fantastic metaphor of Jekyll’s transformation.

The identification of the beastly Hyde with the unruly elements of mass society that challenge the position of Jekyll and his peers has been made before. In a richly suggestive essay, Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle have interpreted the story as an allegory of an artist’s feelings of contamination at having to write for an undiscerning public.²⁶ They quote

26. Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle, “The Education of Edward Hyde: Stevenson’s ‘Gothic Gnome’ and the Mass Readership of Late-Victorian England”, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde after One Hundred Years*, 265-82.

from a letter written by Stevenson to Edmund Gosse in 1886 in which he declares:

I do not write for the public; I do write for money, a nobler deity; and most of all for myself, not perhaps any more noble, but both more intelligent and nearer home.

Let us tell each other sad stories of the bestiality of the beast whom we feed I do not like mankind; but men, and not all of these — and fewer women. As for respecting the race, and, above all, that fatuous rabble of burgesses called "the public", God save me from such irreligion! — that way lies disgrace and dishonour. There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular.²⁷

While this quote, together with other evidence supplied by Brantlinger, usefully focuses our attention on the role of writing and authorship at this time, the authors of the essay then weaken their case by seeing Hyde as a manifestation of the repressed desire to abase oneself before the public. To consider *Jekyll and Hyde* as one of the morsels which Stevenson feeds to the beast (though it is curious he does not see it is the beast that feeds *him*) is fair enough, but to argue that the tale is an "unconscious 'allegory' about the commercialization of literature and the emergence of a mass consumer society in the late-Victorian period",²⁸ is unfortunately to overlook those many features of the narrative that speak of the larger context of which the author's predicament is simply a symptom.

This ambiguity is found in Stevenson's own position, of which Brantlinger and Boyle remark:

Despite being able to fall back on his father, Stevenson desperately wanted to earn his living as a writer. Producing a "shilling shocker" for Longmans [*Jekyll and Hyde*] had been marketed as a shilling shocker for the Christmas of 1885 but was completed too late and came out in the New Year] might disagree with his sense of the higher aims of literature, but it agreed with his desire for financial independence and popularity.²⁹

Brantlinger and Boyle further claim that it was in part due to his "deep-rooted ambivalence" toward the literary marketplace that Stevenson

27. *Ibid.*, 272.

28. *Ibid.*, 266.

29. *Ibid.*, 265.

"responded ambivalently" to *Jekyll and Hyde* (which he claimed to have written to meet the bills of Byles the butcher) "at times referring to it as if it were a despised double, or at least the unwanted spawn of the weaker, Hyde-like side of himself".³⁰ Again, though this is interesting and relevant, it distracts from the wider circumstances that have helped create this ambivalence. Brantlinger and Boyle are on stronger ground when they comment that "Hyde was thus both a chief cause of his creator's popular success and an ironic, albeit unconscious image of that popularity — the 'ape-like', atavistic image of 'the people'".³¹ We might recall here Hyde's words to Enfield and the doctor after they have witnessed his trampling of the girl: "'If you choose to make capital out of this ... I am naturally helpless'" (5-6). Stevenson indeed made capital out of this, selling, according to one report, forty thousand copies of his tale within six months of its publication. It has been seen as the first of his stories to win widespread popularity with adults and children and Andrew Lang wrote of how Stevenson "wins every vote, and pleases every class of reader".³²

30. *Ibid.*, 266.

31. *Ibid.*, 278.

32. Andrew Lang, 35.

TWO VISIONARY STORYTELLERS OF 1894: R.L. STEVENSON AND ANTON CHEKHOV

NEIL CORNWELL

*One afternoon he opened the bookcase
Found The Black Monk and Other Stories
By Anton Chekov. Nothing could hold his
Attention. The words had changed to pothooks,
Hangers. Words hid their meaning from him.
They turned to Russian again. His steps
Falterred. Lear roamed across the Steppes.
The jester disappeared in dimness.*

Austin Clarke, *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, XVI.

At first glance, Robert Louis Stevenson and Anton Chekhov might look strange bedfellows. The Scottish master-historical adventure novelist and romancer might seem some way removed from the Russian master-dramatist of provincial tedium and degentrification. Obviously enough, if Stevenson's reputation now should rest largely on full-length narratives of blood and thunder, read and appreciated largely by children, even in terms of prose fiction he would appear to remain at some considerable distance from the author of *The Steppe*, the chronicler of the breaking string and (in his story "My Wife") of country winters featuring "those long, tedious, quiet evenings when even dogs are too bored to bark and the very clock seems to languish, weary of ticking".¹

However, that would only form the most obvious part of the picture. There is of course another Chekhov, one rather more apparent perhaps in the year 1894 than our present conception of him, and indeed our initial stereotypical sketch, might suggest: Chekhov the storyteller. In 1894 Chekhov's four major plays still lay ahead of him, his reputation as a

1. Anton Chekhov, *A Woman's Kingdom and Other Stories*, translated by Ronald Hingley, Oxford, 1989 (The World's Classics), 45.

dramatist very largely still to come. He was far better known then as a prose writer and it is principally from within the genre of the short story that any meaningful comparison might emerge.

Not that there are not broader superficial points which might be made first. Stevenson and Chekhov were contemporaries, strikingly possessing dates of birth and death an exact decade apart; both writers died of or following respiratory diseases in foreign parts, where they had gone in search of healthier climes, at the age of forty-four (Stevenson to the East in 1894; Chekhov to the West in 1904). Both left chronicles of their travels in distant parts; again, the occidental Stevenson in the South Seas; and this time the southern Russian Chekhov too in the Far East. Stevenson's deep interest in Scottish history might be seen as counterbalancing Chekhov's profound concern for his contemporary Russia.

Neither man would exactly be describable as an archetypal *fin-de-siècle* decadent, although both displayed at least mildly Bohemian qualities. Stevenson's early lifestyle was not untypical of the soft underbelly of Victorian values, while there is more than has yet graced the officially printed page to, for instance, Chekhov's sojourns in Ceylon and Hong Kong on his return journey from Sakhalin. Chekhov indeed, in one of his stories of 1894 ("A Woman's Kingdom"), displays an overt awareness of *fin-de-siècle* demeanour, through the words of one Lysevich (a shyster lawyer and social and financial predator), addressed opportunistically to the story's heroine:

A *fin-de-siècle* woman — I mean a young one and, of course, a rich one — must be independent, clever, elegant, intelligent, bold. And a shade immoral. I say a shade immoral, immoral within limits, because you'll agree that everything is exhausting in excess. You mustn't vegetate, dear lady, you mustn't live like all the rest, you must savour life, and a touch of immorality is the very spice of existence. Plunge into flowers with a reek that drugs the senses, choke in musk, eat hashish. Above all love, love, love. If I were you I'd start off with seven men, one for each day of the week, and I'd call one Monday, the next Tuesday, the third Wednesday and so on. Let each know his own day.²

The lady, of course, does no such thing — at least, not within the scope of the story.

2. *Ibid.*, 117-18.

If in its most general sense, the term “decadence” has to do with non-active decline (as classically demonstrated in Huysmans’ seminal novel *A Rebours*), then who better than Chekhov chronicled the passivity within the decline of Tsarist Russia? It is in the narratives of Stevenson that, in general terms, things tend to happen; in the narratives of Chekhov they usually do not — or not quite; Chekhov the raconteur, though, was more than capable of striking a *fin-de-siècle* pose of ever-so-slightly *risqué* abandon; from 1888 he more than once referred to medical science as his legal wife and literary art as his mistress; “When I’m tired of one”, he wrote, “I spend the night with the other. That may not be very proper, but it helps to avoid boredom, and, anyway, neither of them loses anything because of my treachery”.³ If Stevenson the storyteller and romancer, for most of his career at least, felt constrained in his expression of sexuality by Victorian values and bowdlerising editors, Chekhov too had to contend with the Tsarist censorship in this and other matters.

If, however, we turn more closely to the stories of Stevenson and to those of Chekhov — and in particular those of the latter in 1894 — we shall find a greater proximity than might have been expected between these two masters of the short story, both of whom possessed and exhibited so much of what Walter Benjamin terms “the incomparable aura about the storyteller”.⁴ Potential points of contact, or of similarity, are in fact multiple. It could be instructive to compare *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* with Chekhov’s “Ward Number Six”. Chekhov’s medical and literary preoccupations with the human body might be looked at as a development of Stevenson’s morbid fascinations as displayed in “The Body-Snatcher”.⁵ On a broader Russian level, Stevenson was to an extent taken by Tolstoyan thinking, while his story “Markheim” bears a strong imprint of *Crime and Punishment*. As already suggested, Chekhov’s *The Island Sakhalin* might be seen as comparable to Stevenson’s *In the South Seas* (thus opening vistas on to the now popular realms of colonial discourse and post-colonial theory). Indeed, Chekhov’s detailed sociological study is very much the kind of academic work which Stevenson so wanted to produce, but never did, on the South Seas region.

3. Chekhov: *A Life in Letters*, trans. and ed. Gordon McVay, London, 1994, 57 (hereafter referred to as McVay).

4. Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov”, in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London, 1970, 109.

5. On Chekhov and the human body, see Cathy Popkin, “Chekhov’s Corpus: Bodies of Knowledge”, *Essays in Poetics*, XVIII/1 (1993), 44-72.

It may be that further pairs of short stories by Chekhov and Stevenson could profitably be selected for comparison. However, the two chosen here, stemming largely from an exploitation of Chekhov's "The Black Monk" of 1894 as a starting point, result in the foregrounding, ironically perhaps, of one of Chekhov's most "active" stories (and almost his only "Gothic" story, written according to Victor Terras, "to debunk the rebirth of romantic mysticism in the 1890s"),⁶ which is read against what is probably Stevenson's most actionless piece of fiction (virtually plotless in its parable or fable style), "Will o' the Mill" of 1878.⁷

As my reading will suggest that Stevenson's story could almost have served as a template for a later and more complex re-working by Chekhov, the question arises as to what Chekhov might have known of Stevenson's fiction and when. *Treasure Island* and *Jekyll and Hyde* were among the first Stevenson works to be translated into Russian in the second half of the 1880s; the only other works to have appeared by 1894 were *Prince Otto*, *The Black Arrow* and *The Master of Ballantrae*.⁸ The only clue as to Chekhov's awareness of Stevenson, an author whose boyish narratives — like those of Mayne Reid — he would certainly have appreciated, lies in his inclusion of *Strannaya istoriya* ("The Strange Story" — of Jekyll and Hyde, that is, in an edition published by his friend Suvorin) among lists of books ordered for Sakhalin school libraries in 1891.⁹ Further translations followed quickly after Stevenson's death, but it was 1901 before a four-volume set was published, including a fair selection of the short stories (a "complete" edition in twenty volumes came out in 1913–14, a decade after Chekhov's death).¹⁰ It therefore seems to be the case that Chekhov would not have read "Will o' the Mill"; while the idea of his having some notion of it cannot be completely excluded, any direct influential relationship appears unlikely.

6. Victor Terras, *A History of Russian Literature*, New Haven and London, 1991, 467.

7. For a brief summary of Chekhov's "The Black Monk" and Stevenson's "Will o' the Mill", see the *Appendix*.

8. Nina Diakonova, "Robert Louis Stevenson in Russia", *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10 (1988), 221, n.2.

9. A.P. Chekhov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh* ("Full Collected Works and Letters"), Moscow, 1976–1982; *Pis'ma*, IV, Moscow, 1976, 181. I am grateful to Donald Rayfield and Gordon McVay for this information.

10. Diakonova, 221, nn. 2 to 5.

We might also care to note that “The Black Monk”, like Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, derived from an authorial nightmare. Chekhov wrote to Suvorin on 25 January, 1894:

if an author depicts a character who is mentally ill, that does not mean that he himself is ill. I wrote “The Black Monk” in a mood of cold reflection, without experiencing any depressed thoughts. I simply felt like depicting delusions of grandeur. The monk who scuds across the field appeared to me in a dream, and, upon waking up in the morning, I told Misha [his brother] about it. So you can tell Anna Ivanovna [Suvorin’s wife] that, thank God, poor Anton Pavlovich has not yet taken leave of his senses, but simply tucks in to a good supper and as a result sees monks in his dreams
....¹¹

Although D.S. Mirsky describes “The Black Monk” as, out of Chekhov’s entire *oeuvre*, “the only story that is quite certainly a failure”,¹² subsequent criticism has more than reprieved Checkhov’s monkish tale, presenting it as a work of considerable sophistication and skill. The most satisfying reading so far produced is that by Michael O’Toole in 1982.¹³ Without wishing to dissent to any appreciable extent from O’Toole or his methods — it remaining my favoured strong reading, or “strong discourse”, as Jonathan Culler would call it — I wish now to re-read “The Black Monk” against Stevenson’s “Will o’ the Mill”, to see what effect this may have on our overall perspective of both or either stories, or to see whether we can, as Culler puts it, “produce heat and light by rubbing two texts together”.¹⁴

This will be done firstly by drawing structural and thematic comparisons; and secondly by seeing both stories as deriving, in some part at least, from the Gothic tradition. “Gothic”, in a rough working

11. McVay, 144.

12. D.S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature*, New York, 1949, 364. Stevenson too at first suspected that his tale “is bosh”: letter to Frances Sitwell of 10 August 1977, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson. II: April 1874-July 1879*, eds Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, New Haven and London, 1994, 218; subsequent references suggest that he was later taking it more seriously (*ibid.*, 234, 236).

13. L. Michael O’Toole, *Structure, Style and Interpretation in the Russian Short Story*, New Haven and London, 1982, 161-79.

14. Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, London, 1981, 118.

definition, is taken here as engaging with the fall of a house (literally or dynastically or both), and the consequent disposal of an inheritance — often in close association with the flourishing and decay of a garden or landscape — frequently accompanied or aided by supernatural or quasi-supernatural agencies, and usually expressed in poetic or symbolistic imagery, suggestive of an inner, as much as an outer, landscape or journey (akin perhaps to Elaine Showalter's view of the male quest romance as an "allegorized journey into the self").¹⁵

Both stories are told in third-person narration (though there are instances of the authorial "I" in Stevenson),¹⁶ relying largely on "telling", rather than "showing" (there is, however, greater usage of the latter in Chekhov) and dialogue. Chekhov is more varied in his switching of point of view and use of dual voice. The stories are of similar length and both are sectionalized; Chekhov using nine numbered sections and Stevenson three named ones. As is often the case, given such a structure, the central sections (the fifth and the second respectively) contain the peripeteia; in this case the decision on whether or not to marry (the opposite decision, of course, being arrived at in each story). Chekhov's protagonist Kovrin then proceeds towards intensified mental and physical illness, desperate unhappiness and early death; Stevenson's Will recovers his equilibrium and carries on in quietistic complacency, basking in what Frank McLynn terms "the wisdom of the idler and the opter-out", for the remainder of his full three-score years and ten (or a bit more).¹⁷

Already such a comparison throws up the makings of a tempting psychoanalytical reading which, for all its crudity, is not ultimately to be dismissed. In common with what has been discerned in the work of a number of other writers operating within or on the edge of the Gothic tradition (for instance Gogol and Poe), the presence of a strong sexual anxiety means that the acceptance of marriage (as a euphemism for sexual activity) leads to rapid disintegration and death (accelerated here by visions of the Black Monk). Celibacy, on the other hand, leads to a merely routine

15. Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, London, 1992, 82.

16. R.L. Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston and Other Stories*, ed. Paul Binding, Penguin, 1992, 179, 194 (all page references to "Will o' the Mill" in the text are from this edition).

17. Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*, London, 1994, 138. The name "Will o' the Wisp" inevitably comes to mind when considering this story, its title and its protagonist.

call from the Grim Reaper only at the end of a full lifespan. Supporting evidence for this, if required, can be adduced from both stories. Marjory's urge to pluck and possess flowers, which seems to be ostensibly what turns Will off from the idea of marriage, insinuates a connotation of castration. So arguably does Tanya's habit of squashing caterpillars, while her presumed Delilah-like responsibility for the sheering of Kovrin's handsome locks (noted by O'Toole)¹⁸ invites the same interpretation. For that matter, sexual activity does the women no good either: Marjory dies presumably in childbirth a year after "faithlessly" marrying another, while Tanya, distraught at her disastrous marriage and the consequent death of her beloved parent and ruin of orchard, is described as "*ubitaia gorem*" ("broken-hearted", but literally "killed by grief").¹⁹ Kovrin's chaste past may be seen in contrast to his relative promiscuity (abandoning Tanya for Varvara) by the end. Hints of an incestuous quality to love may also be picked up. Thus, Pesotsky is certainly Kovrin's father-figure or even father in all but name and seems to have been inordinately fond of his protégé's mother; Tanya is at least virtually a sister to Kovrin. However, such a reading scarcely seems fully to satisfy the greater compositional complexities of the fiction.²⁰

Were we to establish, or even suppose, an intertextual link between the two stories, we could postulate the thesis that, not only does "The Black Monk" re-work and develop "Will o' the Mill", but that Chekhov uses the ending of Stevenson's story as his point of departure. That being as it may, Will supposes his shadowy ancient visitor (who may or may not be

18. O'Toole, 174.

19. A.P. Chekhov, *Sochineniya* ("Full Collected Works"), Moscow, 1977, VIII, 255; Hingley, *A Woman's Kingdom*, 94. All references within the text to "The Black Monk" in Russian are followed by those from the English translation, and are taken from these editions.

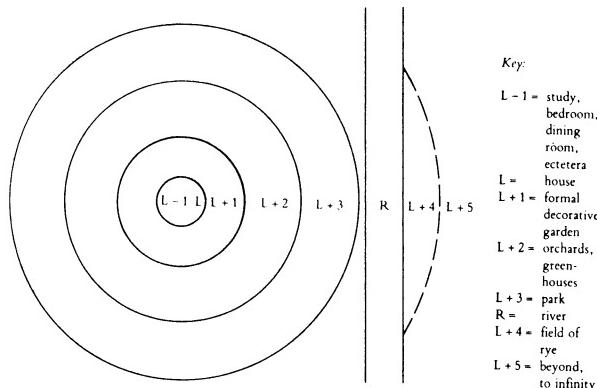
20. Nevertheless, what is the post-Freudian reader to make of a passage such as the following from "Will o' the Mill"?:

For nearly three years Will and Marjory continued on these terms ... for all that time I believe Will was nearly as happy as a man can be there was one corner of the road, whence he could see the church-spire wedged into a crevice of the valley between sloping fir-woods, with a triangular snatch of plain by way of background, which he greatly affected as a place to sit and moralise in before returning homewards; and the peasants got so much into the habit of finding him there in the twilight that they gave it the name of "Will o' the Mill's Corner" (194).

This may also be seen in the context of ideas referred to in note 28 below.

identical to the legendary “very old man shod with iron” [178] of the first section) to be a “doctor” and drinks a bottle of wine with him before setting forth “upon his travels” (201) in the Grim Reaper’s carriage. Chekhov’s exhausted and distraught Faust-figure, the *magister* Kovrin, in the very first lines of “The Black Monk”, acts upon the casual advice of his “doctor friend” (226/70), over a bottle of wine, by going on his travels by carriage to the Pesotsky’s estate of Borisovka, thus precipitating what was to prove his catastrophic decline. The interrelationship here between Dr Faustus, Dr Death and Dr Chekhov is a fascinating one, upon which we could not possibly do any more than wildly speculate.

Further structural parallels can be made. Stevenson’s fabular composition purports to cover Will’s whole life, but inevitably it concentrates on certain key scenes, events and conversations. Chekhov’s story zooms in on the crisis points of Kovrin’s disintegration, over his last three years and when he is in his late thirties, but references are made throughout the tale back to his childhood. O’Toole’s scheme of circles of semiotic space in “The Black Monk” (see figure below) could be correspondingly applied to “Will o’ the Mill” with the mill forming the central point, the area and courtyard of the inn with its arbour, garden and trellis forming a second circle (Will’s ideal sphere).²¹ This would be followed by the surrounding area (stream, pinewoods, valley and eminence, overlooking the more distant plain, and circumscribing the limits of Will’s explored territory). Beyond this, further circles would encompass hills and plains, cities and seas, stretching even further out to the underwater depths and the skies.



21. O’Toole, 161; and, for the diagrammatic spectrum of health, 167.

To add further support to O'Toole's circles, it might be pointed out that the expiring consciousness of Kovrin at the end of "The Black Monk" could be said to be describing circles in both time and space. In Stevenson's story, for that matter, Will tells Marjory: "Tis as if there were a circle round me, which kept every one out but you" (186). On the ending of their courtship, of course, she too is excluded from the circle of self. Perhaps as a variation on O'Toole's diagrammatic spectrum of health, we would prefer to construct for "Will" a contour map or table, for altitude in Stevenson's story takes on an overriding significance. This is appropriate for an author who, like Chekhov, suffers from a potentially fatal respiratory condition and is reluctant to admit it.²²

We find reversals and developments in Chekhov, as well as parallels. Chekhov's Faustian quester after "eternal truth" (which, as O'Toole points out, may just mean death from hereditary disease),²³ is counterposed to Stevenson's wise idler. The quest in Chekhov's monkish tale becomes megalomaniac and the megalomania is in fact doubled: Pesotsky the manic horticulturalist taking on only a slightly lesser form of a similar condition. Even Tanya is not entirely exempt; her idea of entertaining her favourite guest is to subject him to reading her father's turgid polemical articles on horticulture! The "eternal city" in "Will" becomes "eternal truth" in "The Black Monk". The monk is developed as a "personality" beyond Stevenson's ancient Dr Death, to take in and exceed the Mephistophelian qualities (albeit, in his case, a Mephistophelianism of inaction) offered by the fat young man in the first section of "Will". Family relations are far more complex in Chekhov. Stevenson specifically divides people into "colonists" and "pilgrims" (178) and in both stories the aspirations of entrepreneurial capitalism clash with a questing for knowledge, as "pleasure" or the eternal. However, this is just one of the themes common to these works.

Let us now, then, take a more thematic and historical approach. The legend of the black monk equates with that of the old man shod with iron. The presentation of the monk, though, may well have reminded Russian readers of Tolstoy's eponymous three hermits (*Tri startsa*), who are able to speed over the sea (as opposed to the West European Gothic monks of, for instance, Matthew Lewis and Hoffmann).

The madness, or psychological state apparently heralded by, or induced by, the monk — the encroachments of mania, of split personality

22. The topography of the story is based on recollections of the Brenner Pass; see McLynn, 26.

23. O'Toole, 177.

and the visitations of an imagined apparition who may be a mere projection, whether of an alter ego or “other” — has its milder counterpart in Will’s split personality; he wants/does not want to travel the world and do things. In the Russian literary tradition, without looking any further afield, the condition depicted by Chekhov is reminiscent of a number of nineteenth-century works. The domesticating treatment of Kovrin recalls that meted out by Vladimir Odoevsky to his protagonist in the tale *Sil’fida* (“The Sylph”); articles have been written stressing connections with Gogol and Garshin;²⁴ Dostoevsky had inflicted a visitation of the devil on Ivan Karamazov; and Chekhov had published his own “Ward Number Six” in 1892. All this is, it hardly needs saying, a considerable development of what we meet in “Will” and in Stevensonian terms recalls his later *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

The father/child relationship is treated in far greater detail and complexity in Chekhov, as already mentioned. In the case of “The Black Monk” a husband/wife relationship is also introduced. Incestuous undertones return us here to the Gothic tradition and perhaps Poe in particular. More recent Russian examples of such “unnatural” or unusual relationships are plentiful in Dostoevsky, with perhaps “A Gentle Spirit” (*Krotkaia*) coming first to mind.

The superman propensity in Chekhov’s protagonist, in particular the division into genius and the common herd, is redolent with Dostoevskian feeling (which, as already mentioned, was taken up by Stevenson in 1885 in his story “Markheim”). Allied to this is the tension between the qualities, or the perception, of the outstanding scholar as opposed to the charlatan. This was to re-surface in the figure of Professor Serebriakov in *Uncle Vanya* (already sketched in its forerunner, *The Wood Demon*). It may be noted too that Kovrin is an academic philosopher whose meteoric reputation plummets, while Will is an uneducated layabout who eventually achieves folk fame as a home-spun philosopher. Ironically too, perhaps, a passing professor takes a fancy to the young Will, wanting “to take him away with him, and have him properly educated in the plain” (180).

There are of course elements within “The Black Monk” that seem to have no real equivalent in “Will o’ the Mill” (not surprisingly, given that it is the later of the two tales and possesses a more sophisticated content and structure) and which seem to allude elsewhere in Russian literature.

24. See Peter Rossbacher, “The Function of Insanity in Chekhov’s ‘The Black Monk’ and Gogol’s ‘Notes of a Madman’”, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, XIII/2 (1969), 191-99; Martine Artz, “‘The Red Flower’ of V.M. Garshin and ‘The Black Monk’ of A.P. Chekhov: A Survey of One Hundred Years of Literary Criticism”, *Russian Literature*, XX (1986), 267-96.

The syllogism uttered by the monk, “I exist in your imagination, and your imagination is part of nature. Therefore I exist in nature too” (241/82), its intrinsic philosophical interest notwithstanding, would seem to point to Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Il’ich*. If there are further remnants of Tolstoyan attitudes remaining in the Chekhov of 1893-94, they are manifest too in the link implied between music and desire in the parallelism of the female voices and violin preceding the first and final appearances of the monk (taking on therefore an aura of omen or menace) and in the reference to “that popinjay with the fiddle who visits us” (237/78), perceived by Pesotsky (and by extension Kovrin) as a sexual threat to Tanya (and to the garden). This would certainly have reminded 4Russian readers in the 1890s of the violinist and the role of music (in this case Braga’s mystical serenade, rather than Beethoven) in Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Incidentally, Kovrin’s first relationship (with Tanya) pointedly does not keep him in proximity to the garden, while his second (the liaison with Varvara) removes him yet further in space, to the hopeless periphery of the Crimea (though in fact he dies in Sebastopol and not, as some commentators claim, in Yalta). Furthermore, when Kovrin reads Tanya’s curse upon him, he confuses the names of his two sirens, as his life dissolves into the thrall of the monk.

Finally, though, let us come to perhaps the most important common theme: the theme of garden and landscape is a crucial element of both stories. This is so, both in terms of the deliberate demarcation of spatial category or area in the two works and in terms of their descent from the Gothic tradition and their encroachment upon the territory of *fin-de-siècle* decadence. O’Toole’s schemas apart, Donald Rayfield and Joseph L. Conrad, among others, have expounded on Chekhov and horticulture, both in this and in other Chekhov works and in connection with Chekhov’s own botanical activities, stressing links with romanticism in general and the landscaped gardens of England and Russia.²⁵ Rayfield calls such elaborate gardens “private Edens”;²⁶ from this we may infer the likelihood of a “Fall” and the fate of the fictional gardens is clearly connected to that of the protagonists. This links in, too, with the opposition of nature and

25. Joseph L. Conrad, “Vestiges of Romantic Gardens and Folklore Devils in Chekhov’s ‘Verochka’, ‘The Kiss’ and ‘The Black Monk’”, in *Critical Essays on Anton Chekhov*, ed. Thomas A. Eekman, Boston: Mass., 1989, 78-91; Donald Rayfield, “Orchards and Gardens in Chekhov”, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, LXVII/4 (1989), 530-45; see also Paul Debreczeny, “‘The Black Monk’: Chekhov’s Version of Symbolism”, in *Reading Chekhov’s Text*, ed. Robert Louis Jackson, Evanston: Ill., 1993, 179-88 and 250-52.

26. Rayfield, 545.

nurture (picked out by O'Toole, Pesotsky having nurtured both his estate, and his daughter and male ward — his pupil and adopted (if not natural) son — that is to say, Kovrin) and indeed here the triad of culture, nature and nurture.²⁷

The grotesque ornateness of Pesotsky's ornamental garden has been frequently noted. The garden as such in the case of Stevenson is of a lesser overt prominence. However, the area surrounding the mill and inn (comprising arbour, trellis and garden, as already indicated), is of a similar importance, as Will's domain wherein he may flourish. The one named flower here, the heliotrope (198), which is associated with Marjory, is not, though, specifically named in Pesotsky's garden. However, Will, in his early restive period before the counsels of the fat young man prevail, feels, we are told, "transplanted and withering where he was" (179). Apart from "Will o' the Mill", we can find other Stevenson works in which details of landscape feature strongly, albeit in varying ways, such as *The Beach of Falesá*, "Olalla" and *The Merry Men* (and no doubt much could be made of the topography of *Treasure Island*).

The use of cultivated landscape strongly connects these tales with the tradition of the Gothic garden. Such a terrain is almost invariably present in Gothic fiction as one of the staple constituents of the Gothic code. It may serve either as a buffer zone between the architectural superstructure enclosing the domesticity or plotted intrigue of the mansion, castle or monastery as central locus and the ruder surrounds of nature, and/or as an intermediate area (a "plot" in various senses) for exterior nefarious action, not least the arousal of desire. The garden, or rather the flora within it, may take on a symbolic significance linked to the mind or the fate of owner, minder or intruding protagonist. Hawthorne's story "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844) is a striking example of this development, appearing at a mid-way point between the classic Gothic texts of the late eighteenth century and the decadent amplification of this phenomenon, as flaunted by Huysmans in *A Rebours* (1884). The idea of nature becoming monstrous is of course a commonplace of more recent horror fiction. At a symbolic or psychoanalytical level too, Camille Paglia equates the walled garden to a woman's body, "the medieval *hortus conclusus*, in which nature works

27. O'Toole, 175. On nature, nurture and culture in Gothic poetics see Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, London and New York, 1993, 96-98; and Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London, 1993, 204; also Neil Cornwell, "No Rose Without a Thorn: Gothic Poetics Revisited", *Essays in Poetics*, XIX/2 (1994), 94-103.

its daemonic sorcery"; Gothic, in any case, to Paglia is "a style of claustrophobic sensuality".²⁸

In conclusion, without attempting to claim a direct intertextual or palimpsest relationship between the two stories, we can argue that reading "The Black Monk" alongside "Will o' the Mill" does assist in the illumination of meaning in both works. Clarification, or reinforcement by comparison, for instance, of the connection — present but less explicit in each story singly — between eros (the acceptance or rejection of sexual activity) and death can help explicate the endings of both works. The reabsorption of the self into nature through the eros-death connection is heralded in the two tales by the appearance of a spectral figure as a *memento mori*. Moreover, Will tells the shadowy stranger: "Since Marjory was taken, ... I declare before God you were the only friend I had to look for" (201); the two then saunter "arm-in-arm", Darby and Joan-like, across the courtyard to death's waiting carriage. Kovrin, on the other hand, is observed (from the dual-voiced — or free indirect discourse — viewpoint of the narrator and of Kovrin's mistress Varvara), following his final encounter with the monk, to be dead, "with a frozen smile of ecstasy on his face" (257/96). The theme of death, according to Walter Benjamin, "is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell".²⁹ Or, to put it in another way, in the words of Camille Paglia, "decadence is about dead ends"³⁰ (whether one wishes to refer to the biological process at large, or more particularly here to what are considered to be non-productive forms of sexuality, which might be said to include both incest and chastity).

However, the intertextual is, of course, as Culler and many others have been at pains to stress, by no means merely a matter of applying one text to another to produce new readings, whatever heat and light may thereby be produced. In its Barthesian form, for instance, intertextuality is far wider than that and its origins are untraceable, lost in past realms of linguistic history or, I would want here to stress, in the primeval swamp of story. If further turns of the theoretical screw should be required, Culler has pointed out that

28. Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, Penguin, 1992, 12 and 265 (this idea may also be considered alongside the passage quoted in n. 20 above).

29. Benjamin, 94.

30. Paglia, 494.

Intertextuality ... becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture; the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture.³¹

We here take "culture" to mean European or Western culture in the broad sense, noting too that, while we may now appear uncomfortably close to the compressed relationship between two individuals which is the feature of Harold Bloom's Oedipal version of intertextuality, the presumed unconscious relationship pertaining in this case brings us closer rather to Lotman's "Universe of the Mind" or semiosphere.

We might also care to take in Andrew Wachtel's adaptation of Bakhtin, for instance, in which he posits another type of dialogue to the Bakhtinian norm of the internally dialogic:

A text that is, in and of itself, monologic (i.e., dominated internally by authoritative discourse) can be dialogized by another equally (but differently) monologic text on the same subject.³²

Bakhtin has in view the novel, rather than the short story; Wachtel has in view an "intergeneric dialogue", often in the works of a single author, rather than the same genre in the works of two (or more) authors. Nevertheless, retaining a veneer of Bakhtinian terminology, we can hope to demonstrate how, consciously or unconsciously (and here, once again, we assume the latter), a comparatively "naïve" version of a certain basic plotline — one of the fundamental building blocks of "story": the maturation, sexual history and death of a protagonist — can be elaborated into (or dialogized with) a structurally similar but formally and ideologically more sophisticated narrative, replete with developments and reversals, by a subsequent or merely slightly later author — be he or she primarily raconteur, storyteller or romancer.

31. Culler, 103.

32. Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past*, Stanford: Calif., 1994, 9.

APPENDIX

R.L. Stevenson, "Will o' the Mill" (1878)

Will, the adopted son of a miller, lives in a valley between pine woods and mountains; from a certain vantage point he can see the lower expanses, stretching away to "the cities of the plain" and the sea. Mention is made of a legendary "very old man shod with iron" who is in perpetual pursuit of "the eternal city". Early in his life Will feels an urge to explore these further flung parts and to live life to the full. The miller expands his business to set up an inn; among the visitors is a fat young man who convinces Will of the pointlessness of any move away. Inheriting these thriving concerns, Will becomes an eligible bachelor and courts the parson's daughter Marjory; however, in a central passage, he decides there is "no point" in marrying her. She eventually marries another and dies a year later. Will matures into a complacent figure and his *bons mots* on the subject earn him a reputation for wisdom. Eventually he is visited by a mysterious and ancient stranger, who leads him "at last upon his travels" — into death.

Anton Chekhov, "The Black Monk" / "Черный монах" (1894)

Andrey Kovrin, a philosopher in his thirties on the verge of a nervous breakdown, follows medical advice and travels to the country to recuperate at Borisovka, the estate of his former guardian, a leading horticulturalist named Pesotsky, and his daughter Tanya. Pesotsky, hyper-anxious over the running and the future of his lucrative orchards, drops heavy hints of the desirability of a marriage between Kovrin and Tanya. Kovrin is suddenly obsessed with the legend of a black monk who manifests himself by a mirage through time and space. As Kovrin's courtship of Tanya gathers pace, he first sees and then converses with the monk. Following their wedding, the couple live in Moscow, where visits from the monk become a regularity and Kovrin's academic career flounders. Despite an apparent "cure", he blames Tanya and her father for his predicament and absconds to the Crimea with another woman, Varvara. A letter from Tanya cursing him for her father's death and the decay of their cultivations precipitates a final visit from the black monk, which brings on Kovrin's death from tuberculosis.

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**ROBERT, ALEXANDRE, MARCEL, HENRI, JEAN
ET LES AUTRES:
R.L. STEVENSON AND HIS “FRENCH CONNECTIONS”**

SJEF HOUPPERMANS

*I will make you brooches and toys for your delight
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night.
I will make a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.*

R.L. Stevenson, *Poems*

Isn't this silly? Mentioning in my title some of Robert Louis Stevenson's literary relations in France, I omitted at least three other names linking him with his country by adoption. First of all, there is his prime companion in the "Murger-mad"¹ Bohemian circles of Paris, where Stevenson regales himself on the type of mundane adventures reflected in the first volume of *New Arabian Nights* and elsewhere. This companion is his cousin Bob, the great dandy and seducer. Next he makes the acquaintance, in the circuit of artists, of Fanny Osbourne-Vandegrift, the woman who will be his inseparable companion for the rest of his life, "pour le meilleur et pour le pire", into the farthest corners of the Pacific. And, last but not least, there is Modestine, a major character in *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, for Modestine is a she-ass with whom Stevenson has a highly turbulent relationship which not for nothing finds expression in the title. He buys the donkey to carry his luggage along the mountain-paths in the inaccessible area through which he is passing. Initially, the luggage continually shifts and drops off, and Modestine absolutely refuses to budge, but after Stevenson's discovery of the use of a goad, their relationship visibly improves and gradually develops into an unmistakable sympathy through alliance of fate. And so the last chapter, called "Farewell, Modestine", ends as follows:

1. An expression used by Stevenson in *The Wrecker* and referring to Henri Murger, author of *La Vie de Bohème*.

She had come to regard me as a god. She loved to eat out of my hand. She was patient, elegant in form, the colour of an ideal mouse, and inimitably small. Her faults were those of her race and sex; her virtues were her own. Farewell, and if for ever —

Father Adam wept when he sold her to me; after I had sold her in my turn, I was tempted to follow his example; and being alone with a stage-driver and four or five agreeable young men, I did not hesitate to yield to my emotion.

It was in truth a “sentimental journey”, with the emphasis on a purifying ascesis; going back to one’s own roots with the most simple of companions. Although, as with every literary journey, earlier travel accounts play a major role as well, so that the traveller is in a double sense a tracker, the essence of the undertaking is a sort of quest for his own identity by going back to the roots. It is an initiation into the contact with untainted nature, with the shining firmament (bringing to the fore the French expression “dormir à la belle étoile”),² but also an opportunity for writing about the indissoluble bond between this landscape and the history of the Cathars. Herein also lies one of the most recognizable characteristics of Stevenson’s novels, which is that, rather than starting from the action as such, he starts from locations which are full of adventure. There is an echo of his journey as that of “an inland castaway”:

I have been after an adventure all my life, a pure dispassionate adventure, such as befell early and heroic voyagers; and thus to be found by morning in a random woodside nook in Gévaudan ... as strange to my surroundings as the first man upon the earth — was to find a fraction of my day-dreams realised.³

Besides inspiring him by this landscape, France also played a role for Stevenson in terms of literary influence. He was a lifelong admirer of writers such as Flaubert, Hugo and George Sand, but his true passion was for Villon and especially for Alexandre Dumas.⁴ As Henry James tells us in his “Introduction to Stevenson”, Dumas was, after George Meredith,

2. R.L. Stevenson, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, Everyman edn, 1993, 198.

3. *Ibid.*, 141.

4. His first successful short story of 1877, “A Lodging for the Night”, has the outcast Villon as its protagonist; his friendship with Schwob was partially founded on a common interest in Villon, about whom Schwob taught as well as published.

undoubtedly Stevenson's favourite because in Dumas he recognized his own conviction that the extraordinary is the most precious thing in life, since it embodies the most elevated feelings: "suspense, daring, decision, passion, curiosity, gallantry, eloquence, friendship."⁵ That is why Stevenson is able to state in one of his letters, as Marcel Schwob tells us in *L'Événement* in 1890, that in order to be able to perfect the *Vicomte de Bragelonne* by removing from it the rude and too realistic Porthos, he would readily sacrifice *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Black Arrow*. Just as Stevenson will sacrifice everything for the sake of big adventure, so he is ready to give up his favourite books in order, as Schwob puts it, "to be able to live with more illusion in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*" (the third part of *The Three Musketeers*).

Probably this was precisely what appealed to Marcel Schwob in Stevenson, and which made the former into the first and most faithful of his "French connections", even though the two men never met ("I do not see much chance of our meeting in the flesh", Schwob cites from another letter in *Spicilège*).⁶ After Stevenson's death, Schwob also travelled on a journey to the Pacific and to Samoa, following in his idol's footsteps. What merits particular interest, however, are the critical articles he published, as well as the manner in which his own stories reflect Stevenson's influence.

Schwob occupies a peculiar position in the literary world of post-1870 France (he died in 1905, aged 38). He fundamentally experiences himself as ambivalent, split up between his dreams and reality, thus discovering a deep affinity with Stevenson. In his best work, *Le Livre de Monelle*, which is in fact a collection of short stories about the fascination with the elusive, presented as a series of feminine portraits, he manages to achieve

5. Henry James, *Partial Portraits* (1888), republished in *The House of Fiction*, London, 1957, 132-33.

6. Marcel Schwob, *Spicilège*, Paris, 1896, 98. Cf. the lines cited by Schwob in *L'Événement* (11/10/1890) from a letter by Stevenson: "Comprehend how I have lived much of my time in France, and loved your country, and many of its people, and all the time was learning that which your country has to teach — breathing in rather that atmosphere of art which can only there be breathed; and all the time knew — and raged to know — that I might write with the pen of angels or of heroes, and no Frenchman be the least the wiser! And now steps in M. Marcel Schwob, writes me the most kind encouragement, and reads and understands, and is kind enough to like my work." This letter, which Schwob "cites" in French, curiously translating "to like" towards the end as "aimer un peu", is also quoted by Louis Stott in *Robert Louis Stevenson and France*, Milton of Aberfoyle, 1994, 103 (this book deals in particular with Stevenson's journeys in France and contains interesting photographic material as well as a bibliography).

unity of a kind because, in the words of the critic Raymond Schwab, “in the house of Monelle and her sisters imagination judges reality” (*Mercure de France*, 1 July 1910). As epigraph to the volume he chose the following sentence by Stevenson: “We seldom live our real life with pleasure.” It could be argued that Schwob found in Stevenson first and foremost an author who was removed by a long stretch from the “clinical” realism which he abhorred, but who at the same time avoided the pitfall of a too ethereal symbolism that marks a Mallarmé. In *Le Phare du Loire*, the newspaper edited by his father, he wrote in 1888:

If Stevenson belongs to one or other tradition, it is not that of the melancholy neurosis with which Poe inoculated us, but of the healthy and spiritual ideas from the eighteenth century, that of a Swift, a Smollett, a Defoe, a Sterne. If upon the clear and lucid prose of that period one grafts a shoot of originality of imagination and a romantically coloured bloom, the outcome will be the style of Stevenson. In addition one may assume that he neither chose the side of the subjective novel, the psychological analysis of a Paul Bourget, nor that of the objective novel, the physiological description of Emile Zola, but that he invents living beings that converse, walk and act in real, coloured landscapes painted with three strokes of the brush, beings that are neither all soul nor all body — and there you have his manner of writing.

In *Spicilège* he repeats that in his opinion Stevenson’s magical power originates in the romantic dimension of his realism. “And so one may safely say”, he writes, “that Stevenson’s realism is absolutely ‘unreal’, and therefore omnipotent”.⁷ In his study significantly titled *Marcel Schwob, faussaire de la nature* (“falsifier of nature”), George Trembley analyses how Schwob will develop by approaching more and more this unreal realism. He, for instance, does not so much immerse his characters in an imaginary world as has them create such a world for themselves.⁸ This explains how in his later works, Schwob will develop into one of the best short story tellers in the French tradition.

The collection *Cœur Double* of 1891 is as it were the laboratory for this kind of writing and contributes to creating the opening to a new kind of adventure novel which, following in the footsteps of Stevenson, forms a red thread through twentieth-century French literature. The book was

7. Schwob, *Spicilège*, 107: “Autant vaudrait écrire que le réalisme de Stevenson est parfaitement irréel, et que c'est pour cela qu'il est tout-puissant.”

8. George Trembley, *Marcel Schwob, faussaire de la nature*, Geneva, 1969.

dedicated to Stevenson and moreover contains an important preface. Regarding the contents of this book, Schwob discusses in this preface the "duplicity" of man as being torn between anxiety striking him from the outside, and compassion for the other. The contrast between two similar poles in Stevenson's *oeuvre* clearly lies at the back of this, as with John Silver and Dr. Livesey in *Treasure Island*, or the double nature of Dr Jekyll. Schwob concludes the first section as follows:

So the aim of this book is achieved, which consists in leading the reader by means of the road of the heart and that of history from anxiety to compassion, and demonstrating that events in the world outside the individual may run parallel to the emotions of his internal world, to make him anticipate that in a second of intensive life we re-live the universe both virtually and in actual fact.⁹

The second section is devoted to the aspect of suitable form, and distinguishes between realistic and symmetric composition. According to Schwob, after Romanticism and Naturalism a new period of symmetry has dawned around 1890. He furthermore establishes that, with regard to his own stories, the reader may discover a special style of writing "in which exposition often has priority and in which the breaking of the balance [the "crisis"] is sudden and final; in which are described the particular adventures of soul and of body along the road followed by man departing from his self in order to reach the others".¹⁰

The third and final part of the introduction attacks contemporary realistic literature modelled after the exact sciences. To what he calls a deterministic "syllogism of enumeration" Schwob opposes the ideal of a living synthesis in freedom, characterized by crises and adventures where internal and external worlds engage in the most intense manner. Schwob concludes as follows:

If the literary form of the novel has a future, it will undoubtedly greatly expand. The pseudo-scientific descriptions, the fencing with textbook psychology and badly digested notions from biology will then be banished from it. Its composition will resound in the parts through its use of language; its construction will be strict; the new art must be plain and clear.

9. Marcel Schwob, *Coeur Double*, Paris, 1891, xii (trans. by the author).

10. *Ibid.*, xvi.

Then the novel will surely be a novel of *adventure* in the broadest sense, the novel of the crisis at the cross-roads of the internal world and that external to man¹¹

And the one who had already approached this ideal like no other was undoubtedly Stevenson. Schwob discusses him in terms of “vivacité spéciale”, the particular vivacity which derives from the power of images. Those are the core of a more intense and more genuine reality. The examples Schwob adduces include the following: “In ‘The Pavilion on the Links’ the only interest of the story is in the mystery of a secluded country house, isolated amid the dunes, with will-o’-the-wisps behind its closed shutters” (*Spicilège*, 77). An obscure history about the mafia and a fugitive criminal banker, as well as the rivalry between two old comrades for the latter’s daughter, are additional building-blocks of this tale of violence, blood and fire, with in the background the quicksand along the Scottish coast which continually threatens to submerge the wanderers. The narrator will ultimately marry the banker’s daughter, but he relates the story to his children after she has died. This life, one might say, has been haunted, death has stalked it in every shape, originating in this image of a “haunted house”. Schwob, too, wished to select such tensity of image as point of departure for his stories.

He seems to have succeeded very well in this, for instance in one of the first stories from *Cœur Double*, “Le Train 081”.¹² A former engine-driver recounts how he used to serve on the night express from Marseilles to Paris. In that year, 1865, an epidemic cholera had been conveyed to Marseilles from the Orient, and it was greatly feared that Paris would be its next stage. In the night of 22 September, the narrator’s train, numbered 180, is passed in Dijon by a ghost train carrying the number 081 and in all respects a kind of mirror image. In a nightmarish scene the driver sees, in a compartment belonging to the other train, the dead body of his brother who had been a sailor in China, and he *knows* that a similar thing must occur on his own train, as is indeed confirmed upon arrival in Dijon. He takes care of his brother’s wife and child and concludes his story by stating that the next day, 23 September, the cholera arrived in Paris on the 081.

11. *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii.

12. For the complete original text of this story (*Cœur double*, 31-38), see the *Appendix*. Translations in the main text are by the author; page references are to the original edition.

The external terror, the blue cholera, is closely related to the anxieties resulting from a kind of family romance:¹³ the lengthy sequence of doublings and mirrorings opens the universe of the uncanny (Freud's *Unheimliche*),¹⁴ rooted in an elementary rivalry with the twin brother who features as a fatal threat to one's uniqueness. The pole of the noble spirit of sacrifice is expressed, after and as a result of this panic "hallucination", in the care for mother and child. The composition here demonstrates a very strict symmetry in the impetuous series of reduplications, but it is also founded precisely on a deeper reality which could be characterized as a compulsion neurosis with psychotic aspects.

Just like Hoffmann or Jensen or, of course, like Stevenson, Schwob here describes with all his force of imagination what psychoanalysis will try to theorize about. Some central images in this respect form the foundations for the whole story. First of all, there is the image of the train in the night, which assumes mythical proportions in order to make possible what follows: the engine-drivers wearing big blue spectacles resemble "demons riding red-eyed animals" (34), whilst they are looking for the red signals of the railway track (from which the narrator, like many railwaymen, so he says, retains an obsession with the colour red). Then there is the image of the dead man, introduced as follows: "Then a strange light began to turn in my head [could this be the red reflection of the ineffable fear of the most primitive violence?] and my thoughts receded in order to make place for an extraordinary manifestation of imagination." Subsequently he describes the discovery of the corpse:

In the carriage lay a man, a white cloth covering his face; a woman and a little girl, dressed in silk embroidered with yellow and red flowers, lay unconscious on the cushions. I saw *myself* approaching that man and removing the cloth. His chest was bare. Blueish spots covered his skin; his cramped fingers were creased and his nails were livid; his eyes were surrounded by blue rings. All this I saw at one glance, and I also knew that it was *my brother* I saw in front of me, and that he *had died of cholera* (36-37).

13. About the parents it is stated that they were "too much alone, in their little country house, in the direction of Dijon, and when their sons had left, in winter they used to sleep sadly near the hearth fire, from time to time waking up with a start" (32).

14. Freud also adduces his memory of a train in which he experiences his mirror image as *Another* as one of the characteristic examples of the Uncanny.

These are scenes as memorable as the tapping of Blind Pew's stick in *Treasure Island*; we are reminded of the description of David Balfour's dreams of terror as in utter confusion he roams through the Scottish Highlands during that "dreadful time, rendered the more dreadful by the gloom of the weather and the country" (*Kidnapped*, ch. 24):

and when I slept in my wet bed, with the rain beating above and the mud oozing below me, it was to live over again in fancy the worst part of my adventures — to see the tower of Shaws lit by lightning, Ransome carried below on the men's backs, Shuan dying on the round-house floor, or Colin Campbell grasping at the bosom of his coat [at the moment when he is shot down].¹⁵

Fear gnaws at the character as is the case with McGuire when he traverses London with a bag containing a bomb that could explode any moment. This McGuire is one of the accomplices of the "Dynamiter" giving his appellation to a story from *New Arabian Nights* to which Schwob wrote a foreword. Similarly, the narrator of the railway story will never forget what was burned into his retina, and the framework of the story, that relating narrator and character, is added to the field of tension: the writer features as necessary double.

A new balance is created by the story as such, a balance symbolized by the play of colours whose importance has been indicated above. For Schwob begins "Le Train 081" with the remark: "From the grove where I'm writing, the great terror of my life seems far away. I am a retired old man who rests his legs on the grass-plot in front of his cottage" (31). But when the reader moves via the flowers on the silk dresses to the ending of the story, he will remark how the green bottom of his writing is composed:

My brother's wife is Chinese; her eyes are almond-shaped and her skin is yellow. It was hard for me to love her: a strange notion indeed, a person of a different race. But the little girl resembled my brother so much! Now that I'm old and made feeble by the trepidations of the engines, they live with me — and we live quietly, except that we recall how in that terrible night of September 22nd, 1865, the blue cholera came from Marseilles to Paris on the train 081 (37-38).

Similar fields of tension are created by Schwob in the other stories of this collection. In the same way, in his later, much acclaimed *Les vies*

15. R. L. Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, London, 1924 (The Skerryvore Edition), 193.

imaginaires ("Imaginary Lives") the fate of his characters — from Empedocles to Captain Kid, the pirate with the little goat, from the tragic poet Cyril Tourneur to the serial murderers Burke and Hare — is staked out from a determining image or a fatal event. Here, for instance, we find the portrait of Paolo Ucello, which tells us a lot about the author himself: he did not care about the realism of his depictions, but in an infinite play of lines he looked for exactly that combination which could result in an ideal point of view, as when he delineates the *mazocchi* or kerchiefs which fascinate the eye by their flowing play of folds. This following of the lines from a striking image characterizes the novel of adventure for which Schwob admired Stevenson. He also eagerly supported the latter's point in his "Remarks on the Novel" that fiction is to adults what play is to a child; that in it he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his own life; and that when play corresponds with his fantasy to such an extent that he wholeheartedly surrenders himself to it, when every movement of it delights him, when he loves to serve up everything and to be reminded of it time and again, such fiction is called a novel of adventure.

This notion of adventure as play and of the novel as living and re-living the adventures which give meaning to life, can also be found in another great admirer of Stevenson, Henri Alain-Fournier. Killed in action in September 1914 in the First World War, he only completed a single novel, a unique masterpiece which in the course of the twentieth century became a veritable cult-book: *Le Grand Meaulnes*. If in France earlier adventure novels such as those by Jules Verne or the detective stories by Emile Gaboriau (subtly recommended as reading-matter by Stevenson in *The Rajah's Diamond*) fell outside the official canon, Alain-Fournier's story, published in *Nouvelle Revue Française*, soon became a modern classic.

Augustin Meaulnes is in the habit of making long and lonely trips through the forests and landed estates of the thinly populated Sologne. On one of those trips he happens to witness a curious wedding without a bride, taking place at a mysterious country-seat which, after his return to the village where he lives, he desires to find back at all costs. For there he has met the girl of his dreams, Yvonne de Galais, sister to Franz, the solitary bridegroom. This perennial wanderer becomes his ally, with the result that when at last he is able to unite with his beloved this is only temporary. Franz calls upon the Grand Meaulnes to join him in looking for his lost bride. Years later he returns to the castle of les Sablonnières where he learns that Yvonne has died. He also meets his little daughter there, whom he soon takes along with him in search of new paradises.

The story is narrated by a friend and fellow-witness, later the village schoolmaster, whose modesty underlines the quasi-mythical dimension of

Meaulnes, and who accentuates, through the distance in time, the melancholy depth of the desire described in this novel. The Big Meaulnes is pursued by his dream, which ever disables him for other ideals. The absolute nature of his desire also causes his loneliness and the impossibility of finding peace and contentment in a closed situation. Alain-Fournier's force of style and composition is particularly highlighted by the combination of a great wealth of precise detail and the fairy-like atmosphere he evokes.

In writing his novel, Alain-Fournier was almost certainly strongly influenced by his reading (also grafting his imagination onto reality in that manner — in particular that of his youth and his relationship with Yvonne de Quiévrecourt and Jacques Rivière).¹⁶ Thus we find an explicit reference to *Robinson Crusoe*, and, although the novel is set in the interior of France, there is a complete series of metaphors which imaginatively turns it into a maritime adventure. Thus, for instance, the village school is initially characterized as “an abode from which our adventurings flowed out, to flow back again like waves breaking on a lonely headland”. And when Franz de Galais, the preeminent wanderer, first appears he is “whistling something between his teeth: the tune of a ditty sung by sailors, and the girls they meet in their taverns, to cheer themselves up”.¹⁷

From Alain-Fournier's correspondence we learn that in the summer of 1910 he discovered Stevenson through Gide and the Rivières, and that full of enthusiasm he read *Kidnapped*, *Catriona* and *New Arabian Nights* in one breath, in the period when he also began writing *Le Grand Meaulnes*. That the story never really reaches the broad distances represented by the ocean can be seen as symbolic of the fact that every adventure here seems to be doomed. *Le Grand Meaulnes* resembles a constricted version of *Treasure Island*; with Alain-Fournier too, the issue is an expedition instigated by a map, and a secret location which must be retrieved. However, we actually stay close to home and there is no true escape. One could argue that the metaphors of the novel of the bastard create an adventurous framework for a novel of the foundling.¹⁸ It thereby becomes

16. Likewise the complicated relationship with his own sister, as Alain Buisine convincingly demonstrates in his *Les mauvaises pensées du Grand Meaulnes*, Paris, 1992.

17. Henri Alain-Fournier, *Le Grand Meaulnes*, trans. Frank Davison, Penguin, 1966, 11, 68-69.

18. After the terminology of Marthe Robert in *Roman des origines et origines du roman*, Paris, 1976. The foundling is the protagonist who has as his particular aim to restore a lost intimacy, whereas the illegitimate child encounters the world. It is

all the more seductive, for in this manner it is proven that one need not leave one's own region in order to participate in the big adventure.¹⁹

Mme Simone, Alain-Fournier's mistress, once called him "the faithful friend of Stevenson". As far as the influences on *Le Grand Meaulnes* are concerned, even more than of *Treasure Island* we should think of *Kidnapped*. The opening chapter of the latter book is called "I set off upon my journey to the House of Shaws":

the hero being a sixteen-year-old son of a schoolmaster and the object of his quest a country château. When he comes upon it at sundown, it seems to be a kind of ruin, the windows unglazed, while bats fly in and out. He awakens next day in a fine dilapidated room, a great chamber hung with stamped leather, which ten or twenty years ago must have been a pleasant place.

This certainly seems familiar to devotees of the Lost Domain. Here we find Alain-Fournier redeeming his word in *L'Intransigeant*: "Goodbye, Symbolism! We're going to show the English that we, too, can tell stories", even if he proves the second remark to be truer than the first.²⁰

Apart from the adventurous journey, another dimension of Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and its sequel *Catriona* may have strongly appealed to Alain-Fournier. Possibly he felt that it is on the basis of a far-flung imagination that Stevenson is at his most personal here, as witness also the fact that he gave the protagonist his own mother's maiden name, i.e. Balfour (whereas "David" competes with his Dickensian namesake). This personal side appears in David's fears and desires, with the eventual permanent restlessness (in *Kidnapped* at any rate) strongly resembling what we notice in *Le Grand Meaulnes*: once in a safe haven the others "slept and snored on their hard beds; but for me, who had lain out under heaven and upon dirt and stones, so many days and nights, and often with an empty belly, and in fear of death, this good change in my case unmanned me more than any of the former evil ones; and I lay till dawn, looking at the fire on the roof and planning the future".²¹

Perhaps another aspect is even more important, namely that *Kidnapped* is in the first place the novel of friendship as the ultimate value, an

possible to read in them various forms of a Freudian family romance.

19. Cf. Alain Buisine, 58.

20. David Arkell, *Henri Alain-Fournier: A Brief Life (1886-1914)*, Manchester, 1986, 150.

21. Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, 246 (end of ch. 29).

alliance of destiny which transcends all other relations and which in *Le Grand Meaulnes* we find again in the relationship between Augustin and Franz and also in a sense in that between the narrator, François Seurel and le Grand Meaulnes. In *Kidnapped* this applies in particular to the relationship between David and Alan Breck, the Scottish revolutionary Jacobite in exile (the story is set around 1750). Alan Breck carries just such an aura of magic as does Franz de Galais; gifted with a thousand lives and afraid of no one, he is ready to do anything for his friends and at the same time he is affectingly vain in his military full dress. It is significant, moreover, that on first presentation, even before his name has been made known, in the title of the chapter he is called "The Man with the Belt of Gold". The adventure in its primitive vehemence with its murder and manslaughter, the pursuit and the last minute escape from the gallows, the elementary survival also, together in the wild Scottish Highlands — in the cavities of primeval mother Nature — confirms the blood-brotherhood. And the silhouette of Franz with the bloody cloth around his head or that of the restless Augustin Meaulnes are cast in the same mould.

Catrina (1893) opens the dimension of love towards the ever incomprehensible other, which for Stevenson's hero is the young woman. In spite of earlier plans he only managed to write this second part some ten years after *Kidnapped*. It is significant that love here first seeks to utter itself in the language of friendship, as in chapter 21: "Then we remarked upon the strangeness of that circumstance, that friends came together in the beginning as if they were there for the first time, and yet each had been alive a good while, losing time with other people."²² It may be interesting to mention in this context that the problems of mutual understanding experienced by David and Catrina reach a climax in Leiden, where several chapters are set since David, attracted by its reputation, comes there to read law for a short while. Because Catrina haunts his mind he absolutely fails to concentrate on his Heinseccius in his room over the "canal" (cf. the beginning of chapter 24), nor can he do much else during lectures than scribble Latin verses in the margin of his notebook. From necessity Catrina lives in the same apartment, but both youngsters get so entangled in the misinterpretation of each other's intentions that life starts to resemble a continuous running the gauntlet.

This situation leads to a sentimental low when David one winter afternoon arrives home with a pink flower ("one of those forced flowers,

22. R. L. Stevenson, *Catrina*, London, 1924 (The Skerryvore Edition), 213.

of which the Hollanders are so skilled in the artifice"),²³ which he intends to offer to Catriona. However, he feels rejected by the way she treats him and he subsequently flings the flower out of the window. When upon leaving he notices how it is hanging in the branches of a bare tree in the court-yard, tears come into his eyes. Outside he halts by the canal and lets his eyes wander over the ice: "Country people went by on their skates, and I envied them. I could see no way out of the pickle I was in: no way so much as to return to the room I had just left."²⁴ Again, it is perhaps characteristic that the bond between David and Catriona is only confirmed and their combined future assured from the moment when she sheds blood in an adventurous fight near Dunkirk where she throws herself between the combatants. "See, you have made a man of me now," the lady says, "I will carry a wound like an old soldier".²⁵ This happens two pages before the end of the lengthy novel. This family romance too has its tortuous paths, and friendship between men seems to be the ultimate value.

Notwithstanding *Le Grand Meaulnes*, the adventure novel always remained a by-blow in French literature during the Interbellum. The *romans-fleuve* of Martin du Gard, Duhamel and Romains set the fashion; Mauriac and Bernanos explore the borders of the spiritual world; Malraux and Saint-Exupéry describe individual engagement, and others such as Ramuz, Giono or Colette prefer nature over the problematic position of modern man in his disrupted era. Likewise, the adventures in Gide are only a means to put in motion his explorations of his characters' psychology. The surrealists' reservations with respect to the novel reduce the contributions from the contemporary avant-garde to a few marginal works.

After the Second World War, French literature becomes increasingly varied, but all the same the existentialist explorations following in the footsteps of Sartre and the formalist experiments of the *nouveau roman* will long set the tone for the whole. If the *nouveau-romancier* in his most virulent manifestations prefers, in the words of Jean Ricardou, "the adventure of the novel" to the novel of adventure, there are however also authors who look back to Stevenson when instead of the realistic psychological novel in the tradition of Balzac, they prefer a way of writing which allows adventures and plots to be born from the image offered by geography.

23. *Ibid.*, 245.

24. *Ibid.*, 246.

25. *Ibid.*, 307.

Thus, for instance, Claude Ollier mentions in one breath the big voyages in Stevenson and Jules Verne as a source of inspiration for his “nomadic” fictions which lead us around the whole world, and in which tension originates from the operation of landscapes and other spatial elements upon the main characters. A similar type of observation could be made with regard to a significant part of the work of Michel Butor. The relationship of these authors to Stevenson has probably been best described by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze as he puts it in *Critique et Clinique*:

It is not the case that their surroundings necessarily determine the lives of [Stevenson’s] characters, but rather that these are defined by the voyages they undertake, in reality or in their imagination, and without which they could not exist ... And since the level of reality of those voyages is not higher than the impact of imagination upon the life stories, something unique is to be found in their combination which belongs to art only.²⁶

This statute of art is also adhered to by the authors mentioned, with other writers joining in. One of those is J.M.G. Le Clézio, whose first novel *Le Procès-Verbal* placed him close to the *nouveaux-romanciers*, but who later wrote what are rather mythically toned adventure novels (for example, *Désert*). In *Le Chercheur d’or* (1985) he writes his version of *Treasure Island*, in which the pirate gold, which his grandfather has been seeking for his grandchildren, changes into the gold of the sea and the stars, which has its glitter reduplicated in their love. Simultaneously with this dream of travel, Le Clézio published *Voyage à Rodrigues*, the account of a real journey the author made to Rodrigues, the Caribbean island where his grandfather became the foundation of a family legend. He discovers that his memory, borne up by desire, compensates for the gold treasure which has disappeared for ever, and enables its transformation into a precious chest full of words. In the May 1994 issue of *Europe*, devoted to Stevenson, Le Clézio writes among other things: “I believe that in *Kidnapped*, even more than in *Treasure Island*, Stevenson could guide a young reader fond of adventures to an initiation comparable to that which in other times he could have found in the story of a myth” (11). This is also the kind of story which in the last two decades has made J.M.G. Le Clézio into one of the most important modern French authors.

The latest generation of writers setting their own clear course in France is the group of young Minuit authors (called after Minuit publishers) who, though expressly distancing themselves from attempts to

26. Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et Clinique*, Paris, 1993, 86-7 (trans. by the author).

treat them as an "école" or school, all the same show a number of important common features. It includes authors such as Jean Echenoz, Patrick Deville, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, Jean Rouaud and François Bon. Especially Jean Echenoz, author of *Lac*, which in 1990 won the European Prize for Literature, places himself in the tradition of Stevenson. To him Stevenson's most intriguing book is *The Master of Ballantrae*, and he wrote an interesting preface to a French reissue of this novel in 1994. Here he states that the book contains such a plethora of adventures — piracy, battles, stories about smugglers, woodsmen, Indians and a fakir, about betrayal and mutiny, about duels and treasure-hunts, about journeys to the corners of the earth — that one wonders if this is still an adventure novel. It is quite likely that Echenoz wishes to draw a link with his own writing in which these ingredients are also copiously present, albeit as it were in the second degree, as a new trying out of all the possibilities of the genre (and of its variants, such as the spy novel in *Lac* and the travel novel in *L'Equipée malaise*). Stevenson may already have taken up a similar position as compared to his model Marryat, for instance because through all the complications of plot, a different dimension resounds in its peculiar way. The multiple adventures offer the most fertile substratum for an ultimate input of the *Doppelgänger* motif, which obsessively returns in all of Stevenson's works. In *The Master of Ballantrae* the doubles are two brothers, James and Henry Durie, who become irreconcilable enemies due to war, crime and family ties.

The most frightening aspect in this novel is perhaps the attraction that evil produces, which causes the virtuous Henry to become more and more sinister and violent, as if by imitation; even the narrator, the old clerk Mackellar, will attempt manslaughter. This has its origin in the fascination that James, the Master, exercises upon all and sundry. The novel is fascinating also because by his ghostly absence, which is simultaneously an overall presence, the Master incarnates the elliptic principle which Stevenson self-confessedly pursues. James's irresistible charm clearly shows devilish traits, and Mackellar will remark: "He had all the gravity and something of the splendour of Satan in the *Paradise Lost*" (ch. 8).²⁷

This enables François Lacassin to write in the French edition in the Bouquins series that "for Stevenson adventure meant the victory of Evil", and that he could mirror himself like a Luciferian Narcissus in the Master who continues to be resurrected from death.²⁸ Due to the power of this

27. R. L. Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae*, London, 1924 (The Skerryvore Edition), 163.

28. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Oeuvres choisies*, ed. F. Lacassin, Paris, 1984, 210.

theme the duels are the highlights of the book — in particular the combat in the wintry night of 27 February 1757, which in its highly imaginary setting assumes an apocalyptic character — as are the moments when chance has to determine the future by means of a head-or-tails game (this is already the case in the opening situation of the novel when it has to be decided who is to place himself outside the law in the struggle for the British throne).

In his essay “The Literary Engine”,²⁹ Giorgio Manganelli could rightly state that in *The Master of Ballantrae* the story centres upon “a struggle between the commonplace and the fatal”, the literary work of art being accordingly a nosegay of evil. As to the duel, he speaks of “a quality of form — at the same time frightening and painless — as is to be found in opera: the pure artificiality is a sign of the emblematic value of that event”. Probably, Echenoz says in his turn, it was this ritual dimension of the novel which made a young author, Antonin Artaud, submit a film scenario after *The Master* in 1929 (but this film has never been made).

Jean Echenoz’s most recent novel, *Nous trois*, demonstrates in my opinion an unmistakable relationship with Stevenson’s *oeuvre*. If in earlier texts there perspires, through all the play with novelistic form, characters and postmodern context, an ambiance of anxiety and restlessness corresponding with an empty and uncontrollable existence, this dimension is further elaborated in *Nous trois*. The first half of the story, a kind of novel-of-the-road through France, ends after a sequence of frightening omens in an earthquake with accompanying tidal wave which wipes out part of Marseilles from the face of the earth. The voyage in a kind of shuttle through space, in the second half, passes basically satisfactorily and even leads to euphoric pleasure. But together with an inevitable breaking off of a love relationship which has been established in the meantime, fate keeps lying in wait and the book ends with a scene announcing new horrors: the sky discolours in an ominous manner and a rain of blood begins to fall.

Nous trois deals fundamentally with the rivalry between two colleagues with regard to the vamp-like Lucie Blanche, one rival being an honest brother (Louis Meyer), the other a Don Juan of the Space Age (DeMilo — the King of Venuses). The “nous trois” from the title, which carries in its wake many reduplications, is markedly a postmodern plant as the title of a pre-eminent love story: various couples are involved by means of a

29. Quoted from the French text as figuring in *La Littérature comme Mensonge*, Paris, 28-30.

typically Stevensonian procedure — narratorial variation — which is carried through to the extreme.³⁰

Stevenson's Master occasionally liked to read a number of pages from *Clarissa* for the charm of its style and its pathetic tone;³¹ in his luggage, however, Mackellar finds other books, such as "Caesar's *Commentaries*, a volume of Mr Hobbes, the *Henriade* of M. de Voltaire, a book upon the Indies, [and] one on the mathematics, far beyond where I have studied".³² That the latter closes the list is significant: the kernel of the literary work is like a mathematical law which describes the world elegantly and fatally. Not only William Golding or Peter Ackroyd learned this from Stevenson, but also Echenoz and his colleagues.

30. See also Sjef Houppermans, "Pleins et trous dans l'oeuvre de Jean Echenoz", in *Jeunes auteurs de Minuit*, eds Michèle Ammouche-Kremers and Henk Hillenaar, Amsterdam, 1994, 77-95.

31. Stevenson, *Ballantrae*, 183 (ch. 9).

32. *Ibid.*, 127 (ch. 5).

APPENDIX**LE TRAIN 081**

Du bosquet où j'écris, la grande terreur de ma vie me paraît lointaine. Je suis un vieux retraité qui se repose les jambes sur la pelouse de sa maisonnette; et je me demande souvent si c'est bien moi — le même moi — qui ai fait le dur service de mécanicien sur la ligne P.-L.-M., — et je m'étonne de n'être pas mort sur le coup, la nuit du 22 septembre 1865.

Je peux dire que je le connais, ce service de Paris à Marseille. Je mènerais la machine les yeux fermés, par les descentes et les montées, les entrecroisements de voies, les embranchements et aiguillages, les courbes et les ponts de fer. De chauffeur de troisième classe j'étais arrivé mécanicien de première, et l'avancement est bien long. Si j'avais eu plus d'instruction, je serais sous-chef de dépôt. Mais quoi! sur les machines on s'abîtit; on peine la nuit, on dort le jour. De notre temps la mobilisation n'était pas réglée, comme maintenant; les équipes de mécaniciens n'étaient pas formées: nous n'avions pas de tour régulier. Comment étudier? Et moi surtout: il fallait avoir la tête solide pour résister à la secousse que j'ai eue.

Mon frère, lui, avait pris la flotte. Il était dans les machines des transports. Il était entré là-dedans avant 1860, la campagne de Chine. Et la guerre finie, je ne sais comment il était resté dans le pays jaune, vers une ville qu'on nomme Canton. Les Yeux-Tirés l'avaient gardé pour leur mener des machines à vapeur. Sur une lettre que j'avais reçue de lui en 1862, il me disait qu'il était marié, et qu'il avait une petite fille. Je l'aimais bien mon frère, et cela me faisait deuil de ne plus le voir; et nos vieux aussi n'en étaient point contents. Ils étaient trop seuls, dans leur petite cahute, en campagne, tirant sur Dijon; et, leurs deux gars partis, ils dormaient tristement l'hiver, à petits coups, au coin du feu.

Vers le mois de mai 1865, on a commencé à s'inquiéter à Marseille de ce qui se passait au Levant. Les paquebots qui arrivaient apportaient de mauvaises nouvelles de la mer Rouge. On disait que le choléra avait éclaté à la Mecque. Les pèlerins mouraient par milliers. Et puis la maladie avait gagné Suez, Alexandrie; elle avait sauté jusqu'à Constantinople. On savait que c'était le choléra asiatique: les navires restaient en quarantaine au lazaret; tout le monde était dans une crainte vague.

Je n'avais pas grande responsabilité là-dessus; mais je peux dire que l'idée de voiturer la maladie me tourmentait beaucoup. Sûr, elle devait gagner Marseille; elle arriverait à Paris par le rapide. Dans ce temps-là, nous n'avions pas de boutons d'appel pour les voyageurs. Maintenant, je sais qu'on a installé des mécanismes fort ingénieux. Il y a un déclenchement qui serre le frein automatique, et au même moment une plaque blanche se lève en travers du wagon comme une main, pour montrer où est le danger. Mais rien de semblable n'existe alors. Et je savais que si un voyageur était pris de cette peste d'Asie qui vous étouffe en une heure, il mourrait sans secours, et que je ramènerais à Paris, en gare de Lyon, son cadavre bleu.

Le mois de juin commence, et le choléra est à Marseille. On disait que les gens y crevaient comme des mouches. Ils tombaient dans la rue, sur le port, n'importe où. Le mal était terrible; deux ou trois convulsions, un hoquet sanguin, et c'était fini. Dès la première attaque, on devenait froid comme un morceau de glace; et les figures des gens morts étaient marbrées de taches larges comme des pièces de cent sous. Les voyageurs sortaient de la salle aux fumigations avec un brouillard de vapeur puante autour de leurs vêtements. Les agents de la Compagnie ouvraient l'oeil; et dans notre triste métier nous avions une inquiétude de plus.

Juillet, août, la mi-septembre se passent; la ville était désolée, — mais nous reprenions confiance. Rien à Paris jusqu'à présent. Le 22 septembre au soir, je prends la machine du train 180 avec mon chauffeur Graslepoix.

Les voyageurs dorment dans leurs wagons, la nuit, — mais notre service, à nous, c'est de veiller, les yeux ouverts, tout le long de la voie. Le jour, pour le soleil, nous avons de grosses lunettes à cage, encastées dans nos casquettes. On les appelle des lunettes mistraliennes. Les coques de verre bleu nous garantissent de la poussière. La nuit, nous les relevons sur notre front; et avec nos foulards, les oreilles de nos casquettes rabattues et nos gros cabans, nous avons l'air de diables montés sur des bêtes aux yeux rouges. La lumière de la fournaise nous éclaire et nous chauffe le ventre; la bise nous coupe les joues; la pluie nous fouette la figure. Et la trépidation nous secoue les tripes à nous faire perdre haleine. Ainsi caparaçonnés, nous nous tirons les yeux dans l'obscurité à chercher les signaux rouges. Vous en trouverez bien de vieillis dans le métier que le Rouge a rendus fous. Encore maintenant, cette couleur me saisit et m'étreint d'une angoisse inexprimable. La nuit souvent je me réveille en sursaut, avec un éblouissement *rouge* dans les yeux: effrayé, je regarde dans le noir — il me semble que tout craque autour de moi, — et d'un jet le sang me monte à la tête; puis je pense que je suis dans mon lit, et je me renfonce entre mes draps.

Cette nuit-là nous étions abattus par la chaleur humide. Il pleuvait à gouttes tièdes; le copain Graslepoix enfournait son charbon par pelletées régulières; la locomotive ballait et tanguait dans les courbes fortes. Nous marchions 65 à l'heure, bonne vitesse. Il faisait noir comme dans un four. Passé la gare de Nuits, et roulant sur Dijon, il était une heure du matin. Je pensais à nos deux vieux qui devaient dormir tranquillement, quand tout à coup j'entends souffler une machine sur la double voie. Nous n'attendions entre Nuits et Dijon, à une heure, ni train montant, ni train descendant.

— Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça, Graslepoix? dis-je au chauffeur. Nous ne pouvons pas renverser la vapeur.

— Pas de pétard, dit Graslepoix: — c'est sur la double voie. On peut baisser la pression.

Si nous avions eu, comme aujourd'hui, un frein à air comprimé... lorsque soudain, avec un élan subit, le train de la double voie rattrapa le nôtre et roula de front avec lui. Les cheveux m'en dressent quand j'y pense.

Il était tout enveloppé d'un brouillard rougeâtre. Les cuivres de la machine brillaient. La vapeur fusait sans bruit sur le timbre. Deux hommes noirs dans la brume s'agitaient sur la plate-forme. Ils nous faisaient face et répondaient à nos gestes. Nous avions sur une ardoise le numéro du train, marqué à la craie: 180. — Vis-à-vis de nous, à la même place, un grand tableau blanc s'étalait, avec ces chiffres en noir: 081. La file des wagons se perdait dans la nuit, et toutes les vitres des quatre portières étaient sombres.

— En voilà, d'une histoire! dit Graslepoix. Si jamais j'aurais cru... Attends, tu vas voir.

Il se baissa, prit une pelletée de charbon, et le jeta au feu. — En face, un des hommes noirs se baissa de même et enfonça sa pelle dans la fournaise. Sur la brume rouge, je vis ainsi se détacher l'ombre de Graslepoix.

Alors une lumière étrange se fit dans ma tête, et mes idées disparurent pour faire place à une imagination extraordinaire. J'élevai le bras droit, — et l'autre homme noir éleva le sien; je lui fis un signe de tête, — et il me répondit. Puis aussitôt je le vis se glisser jusqu'au marchepied, et je sus que j'en faisais autant. Nous longeâmes le train en marche, et devant nous la portière du wagon A.A.F. 2551 s'ouvrit d'elle-même. Le spectacle d'en face frappa seul mes yeux, — et pourtant je *sentais* que la même scène se produisait dans *mon* train. Dans ce wagon, un homme était couché, la figure recouverte d'un tissu de poil blanc; une femme et une petite fille, enveloppées de soieries brodées de fleurs jaunes et rouges, gisaient inanimées sur les coussins. Je *me vis* aller à cet homme et le découvrir. Il

avait la poitrine nue. Des plaques bleuâtres tachaient sa peau; ses doigts, crispés, étaient ridés et ses ongles livides; ses yeux étaient entourés de cercles bleus. Tout cela, je l'aperçus d'un coup d'oeil, et je reconnus aussi que j'avais devant moi *mon frère et qu'il était mort du choléra*.

Quand je repris connaissance, j'étais en gare de Dijon. Graslepoix me tamponnait le front, — et il m'a souvent soutenu que je n'avais pas quitté la machine- mais je sais le contraire. Je criai aussitôt: "Courez au A.A.F. 2251!" — Et je me traînai jusqu'au wagon, — et je vis mon frère mort comme je l'avais vu avant. Les employés furent épouvantés. Dans la gare on n'entendait que ces mots: "Le choléra bleu!"

Alors Graslepoix emporta la femme et la petite, qui n'étaient évanouies que de peur, — et, comme personne ne voulait les prendre, il les coucha sur la machine, dans le poussier doux du charbon, avec leur pièces de soie brodée.

Le lendemain, 23 septembre, le choléra s'est abattu sur Paris, après l'arrivée du rapide de Marseille.

.....

La femme de mon frère est Chinoise; elle a les yeux fendus en amande et la peau jaune. J'ai eu du mal à l'aimer: cela paraît drôle, une personne d'une autre race. Mais la petite ressemblait tant à mon frère! Maintenant que je suis vieux et que les trépidations des machines m'ont rendu infirme, elles vivent avec moi, — et nous vivons tranquilles, sauf que nous nous souvenons de cette terrible nuit du 22 septembre 1865, où le choléra bleu est venu de Marseille à Paris par le train 081.

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THE EARLY PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF STEVENSON'S WORK IN ENGLAND AND THE NETHERLANDS

JACQUES B.H. ALBLAS

The reception of Stevenson's work is usually divided into four periods. The first covers the years between the publication of *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and his death in 1894. During his lifetime five of his works were received well or even extremely well in England. *Treasure Island* (1883) was an immediate success and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) was immensely popular. Both *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) were favourably reviewed and in *Catriona* (1893) critics were at least struck by the author's ability to evoke the atmosphere of Scotland. Only two of these five titles seem to have been rendered into Dutch during Stevenson's lifetime.

The second period covers the first twenty years after his death, when with a few exceptions he was highly praised by English critics. In the Netherlands a number of works which had been received less favourably than the five favourites were translated during this period. Stories from *New Arabian Nights* (1882) and *The Merry Men* (1887), which Stevenson had merely written to entertain people, appeared on the Dutch market. Besides, translations were produced of *The Wrong Box* (1889), which in England had triggered off many unfavourable reviews, and of *St Ives* (1897), left unfinished at Stevenson's death and completed by A.T. Quiller-Couch.

During the third stage of Stevenson's reception, which is usually taken to have begun with the publication of Frank Swinnerton's *R.L. Stevenson: A Critical Study* in 1914 and to have ended in the early 1950s, Stevenson was considered outmoded as a literary artist in England. Interestingly enough, this did not result in a decline in interest in the Netherlands. On the contrary, there was a relative explosion of new editions, there were first translations of *The Master of Ballantrae*, *The Black Arrow* (1888) and *Catriona*, as well as new renderings of *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *St Ives*.

But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Stevenson's third stage in the Netherlands is the emergence of well-known Dutch novelists and poets as translators. Between 1945 and 1955, Simon Vestdijk, Theun de Vries, Bert Voeten and some minor literary figures became involved in the further distribution of Stevenson's works. The interest on the part of well-established literary authors no doubt contributed to elevating Stevenson to the status of serious literary artist in the Netherlands.

All this began well before the publication of J.C. Furnas's influential biography *Voyage to Windward* in 1952 inaugurated the fourth stage in the reception of Stevenson's works and re-installed him as a literary artist in England.¹ Paradoxically, this renewed interest does not seem to have had any positive impact in the Netherlands. On the contrary, a qualitative decline set in and the occasional reprint of a Vestdijk, De Vries or Voeten translation was swamped by a flood of adaptations, simplified versions, strips and illustrated classics for Dutch children and boyscouts. Consequently the literary scope narrowed and Stevenson ended where he had begun in our country: as a writer for young people.²

After this brief sketch of the overall production and reception of Stevenson's work, I would like to focus in some detail on the first and second stages, that is, the period from about 1880 to 1914.

With the publication of *Treasure Island*, Stevenson for the first time became known to a wider audience in England. Reviews of the book indicate that it was not exclusively received as an adventure story for boys. It was also recommended as interesting reading for adults.³ In the Netherlands, *Goud-eiland*, its Dutch equivalent, was probably intended for and read by young people only. In England it had originally been serialized in *Young Folks*; and it had been published in book form in November 1883.⁴ Amazingly, the next month, December 1883, a Dutch translation was announced.⁵ But it does not seem to have been realized,

1. For Stevenson's reputation, see J.R. Hammond, *A Robert Louis Stevenson Companion*, London, 1984, 17-18.

2. Frequently the adaptations etc. were not even based on English source texts, but on Italian, Spanish, German and Danish ones.

3. *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner, London, 1981, 132 and 138.

4. Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide*, London, 1980, 63.

5. *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 24 December 1883, 721, for Gebroeders Diederichs.

for it took two more years before the first Dutch edition was brought out, by a different publisher, J.L. Nierstrasz at The Hague.⁶ It was an anonymous translation featuring three illustrations. The only review I have located appeared nearly four years later in *De Schoolwereld*, a title which seems to point to the intended audience of *Goud-eiland*: young people.⁷

In the autumn of 1891 a new translation was announced, but it did not materialize.⁸ Nothing happened for the time being. Four more years had to elapse before a new edition was issued by the Uitgeversmaatschappij Nederland at The Hague. It contained eighteen illustrations. Not having seen any copy of this 1895 edition, I do not know whether it is a new *translation* or merely a new *edition* of the Nierstrasz translation with new illustrations. Moreover, the book is presented not as the *second* edition, but as the *third*.⁹ Things become even more complicated because at a 1906 auction of publications of the Uitgeversmaatschappij Nederland, more than 600 copies of an alleged *fifth* edition of *Goud-eiland* were acquired by the firm of Holkema en Warendorf.¹⁰ The year 1906 also saw the publication of an annotated English edition of *Treasure Island* for the use of Dutch secondary schools.¹¹ This is probably another indication that in the Netherlands the book was primarily read by young people.

Like *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* was serialized in *Young Folks*. Interestingly, a Dutch translation was announced on 24 April 1886, a week before the serial started.¹² Apparently, nothing came of this translation, but the early date of the announcement may be suggestive of Stevenson's fame as the author of *Treasure Island*. More than five years passed before another intended translation was registered.¹³ This time the attempt was not abortive. The title sounds somewhat strange: *Bijna weggemoffeld*

6. *Ibid.*, 4 December 1885, 705.

7. *Ibid.*, 6 September 1889, 515; the review had appeared on 1 August.

8. *Ibid.*, 23 October 1891, 591.

9. R. van der Meulen, comp., *Brinkman's Catalogus der Boeken, Plaat- en Kaartwerken, die sedert 1891 tot en met 1900 in Nederland zijn Uitgegeven of Herdrukt*, Leiden, 1901, 662.

10. *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 1906, 426; the auction took place on 14 March 1906.

11. R. van der Meulen, comp., *Brinkman's Catalogus der Boeken, Plaat- en Kaartwerken die gedurende 1901 tot en met 1910 in Nederland zijn Uitgegeven of Herdrukt*, Leiden, 1912, 977.

12. *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 30 April 1886, 249.

13. *Ibid.*, 17 November 1891, 659.

("Almost Smuggled Away"). The book was issued by J. Noorduijn en Zoon at Gorinchem in 1892.¹⁴ There were four illustrations and the translator was one A.J. van Dragt. At an auction almost half a dozen years later, more than 500 copies were obtained by an Amsterdam bookseller.¹⁵ This is probably indicative of the fact that the book was not really popular in the Netherlands. But apparently it was not so unpopular as to be excluded from a well-known series of annotated school editions, in which it appeared in 1911.¹⁶

English reviewers tended to point out that *Kidnapped* was of greater interest to adult readers than *Treasure Island*. Edmund Gosse in a letter to Stevenson considered it to be "on the whole ... the best piece of fiction that you have done".¹⁷ And according to R.H. Hutton, it had "more of human interest in it for those who have passed the age of boyhood" than its predecessor.¹⁸ In the Netherlands, *Bijna weggemoffeld* seems to have been more widely reviewed than *Treasure Island*. I have traced five late 1892 and 1893 reviews. The titles of the periodicals seem to suggest that in the Netherlands too the reading public included adult readers.¹⁹ But we must be cautious, for in one of the reviews the book is explicitly recommended as a book for boys.²⁰ On the other hand, a somewhat later critic presents the book as one of Stevenson's historical fictions and in another essay treats it as a novel.²¹

In the introduction I mentioned that only two of Stevenson's works seem to have been translated into Dutch during his lifetime: *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. It seems rather strange that *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* should not have been presented to the Dutch public,

14. *Ibid.*, 21 October 1892, 696.

15. *Ibid.*, 1898, 206; the auction took place on 26 April 1898.

16. The series was entitled *Of Olden Times and New* and was published by J.B. Wolters.

17. Maixner, 232.

18. *Ibid.*, 235.

19. *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 30 December 1892, 902; reviews occurred in *De Portefeuille* (5 November 1892); *Het Vaderland* (14 November 1892); *Nieuwsblad*, 1893, 167, 324, 896; *De Tijdspeigel* (January 1893); *Het Leeskabinet* (March 1893); *De Portefeuille* (14 October 1893).

20. *De Tijdspeigel*, 1893, I, 135.

21. Cornelis Veth, "De Historische Romans van Stevenson", *De Tijdspeigel*, 69 (1912 II), 193; C. Veth, "Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894", *Mannen en Vrouwen van Beteekenis in onze Dagen*, 40 (1910), 17.

whereas it was enormously popular in England. After its publication in January 1886, 40,000 copies were sold in six months. It was the subject of sermons and generated articles in the religious press. "It was", David Daiches says, "read by those who never read fiction".²² Early on in February 1886 a parody appeared in *Punch*, a sure sign of the popularity of the work.²³

It seems hardly credible that this parable on the power of Evil to destroy man and, to a lesser extent, on the double moral standard of Victorian middle-class and upper-class society should not have been translated at the time, and that the Dutch should not have availed themselves of the opportunity to appropriate its moral message.

By production book historians usually mean *actual* production. They hardly ever tackle a subject in terms of *intended* production as well, that is, intended publications which ultimately are not realized. But if we approach *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* from this additional angle, it will not take long before we discover that on 31 December 1885 a translation was registered in the *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, that is, even before the story was published in England. The translation was even registered for two different firms.²⁴ But unfortunately nothing eventually happened. Worse, the gentleman and the beast seem to have completely fallen into oblivion for about twenty-five years. It seems that people had to wait until 1909 before another intended translation of the book was announced.²⁵ Work on it must have prospered, for *Het zonderlinge geval van Dr Jekyll en den heer Hyde* was brought out in the same year. The translator was a Mrs G. van Uildriks. Four years later a different publisher issued what was basically the same edition with a new title-page,²⁶ and in 1915 the story was even adopted for the stage and performed by Die Haghe Spelers.²⁷

22. David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson and his World*, London, 1973, 68.

23. Maixner, *op.cit.*, 208-10.

24. *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 2 January 1886, 1; for Gebroeders Diederichs and Gebroeders Schröder.

25. *Ibid.*, 18 June 1909, 695.

26. R. van der Meulen, comp., *Brinkman's Catalogus der Boeken, Plaat- en Kaartwerken die gedurende 1911 tot en met 1915 in Nederland zijn Uitgegeven of Herdrukt*, Leiden, 1916, 634; it was issued by the Mij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur in a series called the *Blauwe Bibliotheek* ("Blue Library").

27. *Nijhoff's Index op de Nederlandsche Periodieken van Algemeenen Inhoud*, ed. A.J. van Huffelt Jr., 6 (1915), 281.

German, Danish and French editions of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* had appeared as early as 1889 and 1890.²⁸ So it looks as if indeed in the Netherlands everything happens much later. But, as usual, appearances are deceptive. For as early as 1896 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde had already presented themselves to the Dutch public. But the problem was that Dr. Jekyll was invisible and that Mr. Hyde was hidden. It was at least very difficult to recognize them. When I first came across a Dutch Stevenson item entitled *Het geheimzinnige testament* ("The Mysterious Will") I did not relate it to Jekyll and Hyde.²⁹ But, of course, in their story a document called Dr Jekyll's Will plays an important role. The clauses of the will are said to be "startling" and "strange" and the will itself is called "mad".³⁰ Unfortunately I have not traced a single copy of *Het geheimzinnige testament*, but the odds are that it represents the first Dutch translation of Stevenson's most famous story.

Treasure Island, *Kidnapped* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* constitute the main body of the Stevenson canon in the Netherlands before 1914, but they were by no means the only titles to be translated. Let us have a brief look at the short stories first. One of two tales from *New Arabian Nights* to appear on the Dutch market was "The Suicide Club". The three sections of the story were separately published in a series called Slothouwer's Reisbibliotheek ("Slothouwer's Travel Library"), a suggestive title.³¹ As Stevenson himself had intended, these stories were meant to provide light reading and entertainment, for travellers in this case, and presumably for train passengers in particular. The lead item from *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables* appeared in a similar Dutch series.³² As to the two remaining stories to be rendered into Dutch during this early period,

28. Harry M. Geduld, *The Definitive Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde Companion*, New York, 1983, 185-86.

29. *Brinkman's Catalogus 1891-1900*, 662; it was issued by Uitg. Mij Vivat.

30. R.L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories*, Penguin, 1979, 38, 42 and 58.

31. *Brinkman's Catalogus 1891-1900*, 662 and *Brinkman's Catalogus 1901-1910*, 977; they were published in 1900 and 1901. The three stories were collectively reprinted by Slothouwer in 1901.

32. *Brinkman's Catalogus 1901-1910*, 977; the series was entitled *In huis en op reis* ("At Home and Travelling"). It was published by E. van der Vecht.

“Markheim” appeared in a periodical only,³³ and the English source text of “Wraak en Liefde” (“Revenge and Love”) has so far eluded me.³⁴

Next to the three long narratives we have discussed, two more prose texts were brought out in the Netherlands before 1914: *St Ives* and *The Wrong Box*. *De verkeerde kist*, the Dutch equivalent of *The Wrong Box*, was published in 1908 and was translated by Mrs G. Loman-van Uildriks, whose maiden name we came across in connection with the Dutch 1909 *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.³⁵ The other narrative, *St Ives: De typische lotgevallen van een gevangene in Engeland* was brought out in two volumes in 1904. It was translated by a Mrs Walther-Keller and perhaps its most conspicuous asset is the twenty original illustrations by one L. Perk.³⁶ I have seen a copy of the second volume featuring what looks like the cover of one of the instalments of an original serialized version with a deviating title: *De ontsnapte gevangene of St Ives, de spion van Napoleon* (“The Escaped Prisoner or St. Ives, Napoleon’s Spy”).

The impact of Stevenson’s poetry was slight in the Netherlands. Six poems from *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1885) were set to music by a composer called Geertruida Vogel and presented as *Kinderzang* in 1915.³⁷ For two of her texts she may have used translations by the well-known Chaucer translator A.J. Barnouw, who in all had contributed eight translated poems from Stevenson’s collection to *Groot-Nederland* in 1911.³⁸

In passing we have mentioned intended translations of *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which eventually came to nothing. But they were not the only Stevenson titles publication of which

33. It appeared in *Europa*, 1910, 258-78; see *Nijhoff’s Index*, 1 (1909/1910), 338.

34. *Brinkman’s Catalogus 1901-1910*, 977; the story was issued by N.J. Boon in 1901. It was part of a series called *Boon’s Geillustreerde Novellenbibliotheek* (“Boon’s Library of Illustrated Stories”).

35. Like the 1909 Dutch *Jekyll and Hyde*, *De Verkeerde Kist* appeared in the *Blauwe Bibliotheek*.

36. It was published in two volumes by E. and M. Cohen.

37. *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 1915, 229; it was a folio of 19 pages and was published by G. Alsbach.

38. *Groot Nederland*, 1911, II, 360-65; two poems, “De Schommel” (“The Swing”) and “De Lantaarnopsteker” (“The Lamplighter”) appear both in Vogel and in Barnouw.

was planned, but not realized in our country before 1914.³⁹ Nothing came of all these intended productions. But they indicate an awareness of Stevenson's new publications and they represent prompt reactions on the part of Dutch publishers to these new publications. Stevenson was an author whose new titles were taken serious notice of. The intended Stevenson translations constitute an interesting, albeit tantalizingly elusive element in the early history of the production of his works in the Netherlands. They shed some additional light on the ways in which his works were initially responded to in their new cultural context.

Having paid attention to the early production of Stevenson in the Netherlands, I would like to wind up by adding a few comments on the early reception. In 1894, the year of Stevenson's death, one Dutch critic regarded the general state of English letters as pretty low. George Meredith, the subject of the article, and Walter Pater were favourably singled out. But in what is called a chaos of low-quality and mediocre work, a few other authors also stood out favourably: Henry James and his "evening-dress" literature; and Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling and R. L. Stevenson, who are all said to focus on the less pleasant sides of man.⁴⁰

This is probably one of the earliest general reflections on Stevenson in the Netherlands. It took another fifteen years before a Dutch critic made a more or less sustained effort to put the whole of Stevenson's work into perspective. About 1910 Cornelis Veth, writer and journalist, illustrator and caricaturist, art critic and literary critic, produced three essays on him. The first is a long and general piece, which he contributed to a long-lived series called *Mannen en vrouwen van beteekenis in onze dagen* (1870-1921; "Men and Women of Importance in Our Days").⁴¹ The second discusses Stevenson's tales and in the third Veth deals with his historical fiction.⁴²

39. The relevant titles are *Prince Otto* (1885), *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 31 March 1885, 167; *The Black Arrow* (1888), *Nieuwsblad*, 24 August 1888, 495; *The Wrong Box* (1889), *Nieuwsblad*, 21 June 1889, 349; *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), *Nieuwsblad*, 11 October 1889, 589; *The Wrecker* (1892), *Nieuwsblad*, 5 July 1892, 412; and *David Balfour [Catriona]* (1893), *Nieuwsblad*, 3 February 1893, 97.

40. R.A.H. in *Nederland*, 1894, III, 309.

41. See note 21.

42. For the article in *De Tijdspiegel*, see note 21; the article on Stevenson's tales is entitled "Stevenson's Vertellingen" and it appeared in *Den Gulden Winckel*, 10 (1911), 97-102.

In *Mannen en vrouwen van beteekenis*, several British authors had preceded Stevenson. Tennyson and Browning, Dickens and George Eliot, Carlyle and Thackeray had been among them. Rossetti and Meredith had found a niche and even minor figures like Mrs Humphry Ward and Queen Victoria had been incorporated well before Robert Louis Stevenson was admitted along with Swinburne and Oscar Wilde. Although Stevenson was a man of importance at last, Cornelis Veth believed that his best work was almost entirely unknown in the Netherlands, with the exception of *Treasure Island*, which he calls an excellent book for boys. It was also read in many schools, but that could hardly be conducive to the author's popularity according to Veth, for as a school book it was primarily used for linguistic purposes.⁴³

Veth considers Stevenson's life to be perhaps even more remarkable than his works, but he is relatively brief, if rather hagiographical on it. It is understandable that this should be so, for the Stevenson myth was in full swing in England. Above all Stevenson is a storyteller to Veth, but at the same time he is much more to him than a teller of tales. In short narratives like *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, "Markheim", "The Bottle Imp" and "Will o' the Mill" he is a very subtle psychological realist, whose characters are living persons.⁴⁴ Besides, Veth is highly appreciative of his broad-mindedness and his tolerance towards sinners and villains.⁴⁵ And unlike the majority of contemporaneous critics Veth believes that Stevenson is accomplished in creating convincing female characters.⁴⁶ The one serious criticism he raises is that Stevenson shows off his intelligence, his subtlety and his style; the tone and the words of his characters are too often Stevenson's own tone and his own words.⁴⁷

Cornelis Veth read Stevenson in English and the range of works covered by him is considerable. He calls *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* one of his most original and psychologically subtle tales.⁴⁸ To him the moral message the story embodies is that man should not exceed the limits of his intellect and his power. If he does, the result is disastrous. Veth is very cynical about the way German publishers distorted the story and made it

43. Veth, "Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894", 4-5.

44. *Ibid.*, 4 and 31.

45. *Ibid.*, 1-2.

46. *Ibid.*, 21 and 33; Catriona is the obvious example, but Veth also adduces a female character from "The Treasure of Franchard".

47. *Ibid.*, 38-39.

48. *Ibid.*, 4 and 29-30.

into a sensational criminal novel. And he is equally dismissive of the German play based on that novel, in which Dr. Jekyll has been transformed into an English lord. To him the main point about the story is the thoughts, struggle and suffering of a sinful but well-meaning man. What happened to Dr Jekyll could happen to all reasonable and respectable people.⁴⁹

Next to this terrifying tale Cornelis Veth's favourites are "The Bottle Imp",⁵⁰ "The Sire de Maléroit's Door", one of the most impressive romantic stories he had ever read,⁵¹ and "The Story of a Lie".⁵² Besides, Veth praises most stories in *New Arabian Nights*,⁵³ and he likes the comical aspects of *The Wrong Box*, although he recognizes it is not among his best works.⁵⁴ Stevenson's poetry for children is labelled lively and funny, his letters remarkable, cheerful, witty and self-critical, his prayers original and poetical and *An Inland Voyage* and his other travel books subtle and kindheartedly witty.⁵⁵

Surprisingly perhaps, in the essay dealing with the historical fictions, *St Ives* is not dealt with. More interestingly, *Kidnapped* is approached not as an adventure story for boys, but as a serious literary artefact. Together with its sequel *Catrina* it is presented as a fine novel.⁵⁶ Stevenson's greatest achievement in historical fiction, according to Veth, and in fiction in general for that matter is *The Master of Ballantrae*.⁵⁷ Unlike Dutch historical novelists like Mrs Bosboom-Toussaint, Schimmel and Van Lennep (with the exception of *Ferdinand Huyck*), Stevenson is seen to succeed in creating authentic worlds and characters. To Veth he is even superior to that great master of the genre, Sir Walter Scott. Stevenson is found to be subtler and psychologically more profound.

49. Veth, "Stevenson's Vertellingen", 98-99.

50. Veth, "Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894", 19.

51. Veth, "Stevenson's Vertellingen", 101.

52. Veth, "Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894", 11.

53. *Ibid.*, 25.

54. *Ibid.*, 26.

55. *Ibid.*, 24, 36, 2; "Stevenson's Vertellingen", 97.

56. Veth, "De Historische Romans van Stevenson", 193; "Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894", 17.

57. "Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894", 18; "De Historische Romans van Stevenson", 189.

As I pointed out in the introduction, it was not until after the second World War that Stevenson began to be held in more general, if temporary, esteem as a serious literary artist in the Netherlands. So it seems as if Cornelis Veth in his early appreciation of Stevenson's historical novels and in his general assessment of his achievement was far ahead of his time. He died in 1962 at the age of eighty-two and one wonders whether and if so in what way he reacted to the contributions made by Simon Vestdijk, Theun de Vries and Bert Voeten during the post-war period. But the answer to that question is well beyond the scope of this paper.

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OSCAR WILDE: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

JOHN STOKES

Just recently I have been spending my time, enjoying myself too, reading some of the many novels and the many plays, watching the several films, that have been based on the life of Oscar Wilde. These fictional treatments can be quite instructive for the scholar, as well as full of unintentionally comic moments.

One of my favourites has Wilde, in what I suppose is intended to be 1893 or 1894, glimpsed at a book-signing session, autographing copies of *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Now there was, of course, no such volume published during Wilde's life, and I very much doubt that in Victorian times book-signing was the established marketing ploy it has subsequently become. Yet the anachronism is not simply fictional in the sense of being untrue, it is downright Borgesian, the kind of impossibility that opens up whole new vistas.

The imaginary *Complete Works* that Wilde is seen signing in the film would presumably not include *An Ideal Husband*, let alone *The Importance of Being Earnest* and certainly not *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. It would give a quite different idea of the writer and of his life. And in one sense what we have even today is not *The Complete Works* so much as *The Truncated Works* or *The Interim Works* or even *The Halfway Works* because it is impossible not to feel that Wilde, if he had not been sent to gaol in 1895, and if he had not died at the age of 46, would have gone on to write a great deal more than he did. Recent critics — Ian Small and Russell Jackson of the University of Birmingham most notably — have argued strongly against the “teleological” view that is sometimes applied to Wilde’s life (and, by an interesting parallel, to his textual revisions) which assumes that the “end” was there from the start:

a “tragic end”, always in control, “immanent”.¹ And they are surely right.

But that makes me think of another moment from another dramatisation of Wilde’s life in which, on his deathbed in that sad hotel in Paris, he is given this bewildering exchange with his friend Reggie Turner:

OSCAR. This has been a long year, Reggie. Now, it has nearly run its course. In a week or two a new year will be born.

REGGIE. A new century, Oscar. (*He pauses reflectively.*) The twentieth century! What will it be like, I wonder? It is strange, is not it, to think this is the end of a century?

OSCAR. (*with a sigh*): *Fin-de-siècle!* Yes, I hadn’t realised that. ‘Life seems to be slipping away from me. events do not loom as large as they did!’ Perhaps that is the tragedy of growing old.

REGGIE: But you’re not old Oscar.²

That, in its way, is just as absurd, and just as suggestive, as the book-signing scene. It leads me to wonder precisely when Wilde first began to think about the *fin-de-siècle* and build that particular “ending” into his intellectual systems.

When did the end of the last century come into sight? When did that end begin? I want to suggest how one set of Wildean texts (just one, not the only one) constructs its own complex pattern as each is added to the last to produce a changing sense of endings. And I also want to identify Wilde’s final sense of an ending not by looking at his intimate life, so rewardingly explored by Richard Ellmann, so much as at the real world around him.

On his American tour of 1882 Wilde delivered a lecture called “The English Renaissance of Art” in which, while borrowing heavily from Ruskin (from whom he had learnt the importance of “revival”), from Arnold (from whom he took the distinction between the “Hellenic” and “Hebraic”), from Morris (who had stressed the importance of “labour”), and Pater (who gave him ideas of “paganism”), he put forward a theory that, for all the plenitude of its sources, is actually quite coherent. Wilde claims that the artist “is indeed the only true realist: symbolism, which is

1. Russell Jackson and Ian Small, “Oscar Wilde: A ‘Writerly’ Life”, *Modern Drama*, XXXVII/1 (1994), 3-11. Also see Ian Small, “Oscar Wilde as a Professional Writer”, *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin*, 23 (1993), 33-49.

2. John Furnell, *The Stringed Lute*, London, 1955, 188.

the essence of the transcendental spirit, is alien to him".³ His meaning, which is his contribution and value can be summed up as "joy". Art has social value because it is "the beautiful and noble expression of life that has in it something beautiful and noble" (*Miscellanies*, 275).

Wilde's "English Renaissance", then, is not a precise re-birth of a previous era so much as "a sort of new birth of the spirit of man" (*ibid.*, 243). After all, there are almost any number of places to return to: some far, Classical Greece; some much nearer, the moment of Romanticism. There is the French Revolution, although "our modern sense of the continuity of history has shown us that neither in politics nor in nature are there revolutions ever but evolution only" (*ibid.*, 246). The English Romantics are connected with the French Revolution in an antithetical way. As always with Wilde, it is Keats rather than Wordsworth or Shelley and certainly not Byron, who reigns supreme in the pantheon. This is because Keats showed how one might live in a time of ideal post-revolutionary peace. That is what the Pre-Raphaelites saw in him. And, again paradoxically, it is the fact of their rejection by the great Victorian public that proves the Pre-Raphaelites' worth.

This is what "Renaissance" means: we start by going back, via the imagination, avoiding, as far as possible, the present: "Art never harms itself by keeping aloof from the social problems of the day: rather, by so doing, it more completely realises for us that which we desire!" (*ibid.*, 256)

Now, in the critical dialogue "The Decay of Lying", published six years later, in 1889, we find that the character "Vivian", who is writing the article with that title, says that his article "is really a most salutary and valuable warning. If it is attended to, there may be a new Renaissance of Art".⁴ Vivian, then, is rewriting the Oscar Wilde of the earlier essay, but whereas that Wilde had argued for the implementation of a "Renaissance of Art", what Vivian claims to want is a Renaissance of Lying. Art and Lying, however, are closely related because Art must always appear to be irrelevant in order to be ahead. It cannot therefore be "true".

According to "The Decay of Lying" the "true decadence" — perhaps the first occasion on which Wilde publicly uses the word — comes when Life "drives Art out into the wilderness" (*Works*, 1078), that is to say, when factual accuracy and precision are the controlling aims rather than

3. Oscar Wilde, *Miscellanies*, London, 1908, 248. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

4. *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, Glasgow, 1994, 1072. Further references to this edition are to *Works* and are given after quotations in the text.

the aesthetic imagination. “The Decay of Lying” is an attack on a gaggle of culprits all of whom have committed much the same offence: journalists, lawyers, realist writers, and, a surprisingly frequent whipping boy for Wilde — Shakespeare. “Even in Shakespeare we can see the beginning of the end” (*Works*, 1079). This is because Shakespeare let realism creep into his plays, he allowed prose to dominate over blank verse and paid too much attention to characterisation.

“The Decay of Lying” concludes at twilight with Vivian citing the soon to be familiar decadent trope of simultaneous beginning and ending. Quoting his own article he looks forward to a joyous future: “when that day dawns, or sunset reddens” (*Works*, 1090). We can now make our endings endlessly, safe in the knowledge that they will be exceeded only by the endlessness of our beginnings. There can sometimes be a kind of comforting familiarity about evolutionary decadence.

But this decadent sense of time is strikingly absent from Wilde’s essay “The Soul of Man under Socialism”, published in February 1891, supposedly in response to hearing one of Shaw’s Fabian lectures. For a start the future tense is consistently and confidently used throughout, everything “will” happen, although in some unnamed, undated, unlocated future. This Socialist polemic affirms progress rather than “renaissance” and has quite close affiliations with a currently popular genre, the “Utopia”: William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* is the most obvious example, but it also includes, for instance, Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backwards*.

That powerful critic of this period, the late John Goode, pointed out in one of his last essays that most of the utopias of the 1880s — books such as *Looking Backwards* — are “immanentist” because they assume that the future is organically or naturally embedded in the present.⁵ Wilde does not take up this position in “The Soul of Man”, though neither does he show much serious interest in revolution either. Violence belongs to the past. Indeed, Wilde is altogether vague about how change will take place.

In fact, “The Soul of Man” appears to be less about Socialism than “Individualism” which, in turn, seems to mean something like artistic creativity. There is no mention of class conflict (not much mention of class at all) although there are heartfelt references to oppression and misery — “To sweep a slushy crossing for eight hours on a day when the east wind is blowing is a disgusting occupation” (*Works*, 1183) — and to what these days would be called “deprived areas” such as the East End of London. Wilde’s end is the establishment of complete Individualism. Socialism is

5. John Goode, “Writing beyond the End”, in *Fin-de-siècle/Fin du globe*, ed. John Stokes, London and Basingstoke, 1992, 14-36.

a means to this “end” rather than an “end in itself”. The end in itself is still art. Wilde has, however, strengthened his notion of art as oppositional. He has recognized that the delivery of man from past and present, the actual process of change, must be aesthetic.

“Aestheticism” is therefore more heavily politicized than ever before; or maybe we should say that politics are aestheticized as never before; or maybe, as Goode put it, we should say politics are aesthetic. The Renaissance was great, says Wilde, because it interested itself only in the making of beautiful things (*Works*, 1193). The creation of the modern state, which Wilde dates from the time of Louis XIV, imposed an unaesthetic uniformity, dull repetition and the ugly apparatus of modern politics. Then, as if anxious to disclaim this piece of historiography before it might be seriously questioned, to forestall any objection, Wilde announces:

But the past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are. (*Works*, 1193-94)

The real villain of “The Soul of Man” is the journalist rather than the capitalist employer: “In the old days men had the rack. Now they have the Press” (*Works*, 1188). This is why Regenia Gagnier could argue that “The Soul of Man” is about “the press and media control”.⁶ That may be true, but I would want to stress that newspaper events may still be real, however much they may be recreated by the medium in which they are reported. I think that Wilde knew that too.

If we turn to Wilde’s journalism, the Wilde we know or think that we know, appears to be absent. Not only is his style by no means unique, few of what we have come to think of as his major preoccupations come to the fore. In particular, there is no mention of sex. (Though perhaps that is not surprising since papers are the places where you discuss the sex lives of other people, preferably Dukes and Duchesses, rather than your own: the papers in Wilde’s time were certainly full of aristocratic scandal). This bread-and-butter reviewing can cast a light on Wilde’s sense of history and politics. If, instead of reading his work expecting to discover codes, secrets all along the way, looking for “development”, we read him “diachronically”, read his journalism “laterally” across the surrounding

6. Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*, Stanford: Calif., 1986, 29.

columns, we can re-construct the world in which he composed his most famous fictions.

And what we see in the 1880s, particularly through the lens of W.T. Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette*, is a world of considerable moral and political complexity. This is the time of "The Maiden Tribute" (Stead's exposure of the child prostitution racket in 1885) and of the Jack the Ripper murders in 1888: sensational scandals reported, as Judith Walkowitz has shown, in narratives that took their shape from realist melodrama.⁷ As Laurel Brake puts it, "The *Pall Mall Gazette* strain of investigative journalism invokes the world of naturalism — the absorption in low life or the sordid found in contemporary French novels by Zola and English novels by Gissing, Moore and Hardy".⁸ Reading these columns with their relentless, yet curiously excited, gaze upon social misery one certainly comes to see why Wilde in "The Soul of Man" should have linked journalists and lawyers with realist writers and wished to banish the whole lot of them, in a kind of reversal of Plato, from his personal republic of art.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* is also full of quite heartening news: of women students at Newnham and Girton, for instance; of arguments about the rights and wrongs of the marriage contract. There are semi-technical accounts of recent scientific discoveries and discussions of the currently controversial vogue for spiritualism. An anonymous review (not by Wilde) of Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 25 April 1889 claims that the sympathetic reader must "be eagerly searching for that bridge between matter and thought, between the vibrating nerve-cell and percipency", which is very much the language of portions of *Dorian Gray* and of Wilde's various excursions into scientific discourse.

Then again, this is the time of positive political action and debate: from the widely reported visit of Henry George himself in January 1885 through to the Dock Strike of 1889. Early in 1890 we find reports of an extended debate on "Socialism and Individualism" and the frequent recurrence of that "decadent" double image of dusk and dawn, though generally applied to socialism.⁹ From Edward Bellamy's book we will learn apparently that "the seers of socialism are beginning to see more clearly. That which was but a dimly outlined sketch against the palpable

7. Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, London, 1992.

8. Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, London and Basingstoke, 1994, 96.

9. For example 11 January and 26 January 1890.

veil of the infinite future is now being filled with glowing colours".¹⁰ William Morris is reported as voicing an environmentally aware version of the same idea: "In the coming socialistic millennium one would see the sun rise without the fog obscuring the daylight".¹¹

So we can re-contextualize "The Soul of Man", this time not in the realm of fictional utopias so much as in that of political journalism. Read in the light of these reports and leaders, "The Soul of Man" (like most of Wilde's output) becomes a brilliantly extemporized performance on contemporary newspaper themes. Consider this item in the "Occasional Notes" column of the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 17 September 1889:

The most extraordinary theory of the Whitechapel murders and of the immunity of their perpetrator has reached us from a correspondent, who claims for his suggestion the praises of ingenuity. We readily accord them. Our correspondent announces that he has solved what has puzzled the police and has made clear to himself what journalists denounce to be still shrouded in mystery. Mr Oscar Wilde wrote an article some time ago complaining of the decay of lying, and showing how much of the facts of the world are governed by the fiction, and that fiction after all is the only real and abiding fact. Now what, asks our correspondent, has been the most striking work of fiction which the last few years have produced? And the question he asks he promptly answers. It was a little brochure which shocked some religious people and marvellously impressed others, but which every reader admitted to have power and novelty and a certain rare convincing quality. The author was Mr Stevenson, and the name of the tract "The strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde". The study of the black art in this work enables a man with a naturally vicious and cruel nature to indulge all his criminal propensities, and when detection seems inevitable to escape arrest with absolute immunity. All that is necessary to enable a criminal in actual life to persevere in his course of crime and defy Scotland Yard is the attainment of Dr Jekyll's drugs and methods. That he should so succeed might seem almost an impossibility. But Mr Oscar Wilde has shown that fiction produces fact. He pointed out that Mr Burne Jones originated a type of delicate loveliness which nature soon copied, and which she continues to reproduce. This wonder surpasses the possibility of some respectable Harley-street doctor, at the end of a day's work, taking a seidlitz powder and coming out to Whitechapel to practice his murderous arts.

10. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 June 1889.

11. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 January 1889.

The murders took place in 1888; Stevenson's book had been written in 1885, possibly inspired, at least in part, by "The Maiden Tribute" campaign. The idea that fact and fiction might be intimately related is not exactly new. The revealing aspect of the passage quoted above is that it shows that Wilde's theory of art was on hand to explain *how* life might imitate art. In the circumstances Wilde's theory makes perfect sense: once again his apparent flight of fancy turns out to be an exorbitant version of an idea in which everyone could share. In *Dorian Gray* in 1890 he was to go one step further, confounding the naive view of influence by having its hero led astray by ideals (the portrait) as much as by decadence (those "poisonous books" we associate with Baudelaire or Huysmans). Which is why the novel still issues a disconcerting lesson to social moralists.

In many ways "The Soul of Man" would have made a suitable culmination for Wilde's excursions into political theory in that it puts the future happily and inspiringly where it belongs, in the future, while allowing for the prophetic pleasure to be gained in the present from art. And because it comes near the beginning of Wilde's most prolonged bout of creativity (*Dorian Gray*, most of the plays) it marks a moment when, in the manner of a Hollywood bio-pic, the story of Wilde's life might have been elegantly and optimistically rounded off. He had now achieved the success — artistic, popular, commercial — that could be safely assumed to continue.

That, of course, is not what happened. There was a surprise ending (just how unexpected it was biographers will continue to argue), or, more precisely perhaps, a catastrophe, and "The Soul of Man" was eventually to be followed by a very different foray into philosophical discourse: "De Profundis". This long letter, ostensibly addressed to Lord Alfred Douglas, composed in prison, re-writes "The Soul of Man" as that essay had re-written "The Decay of Lying" which had, in turn, been a re-writing of "The English Renaissance". The prison letter works upon all that has come before it according to what the deconstructionists call the paradox of supplementarity: as an unexpected addition it both confirms and violates the autonomy of its precedents.

Whereas "The Soul of Man" places Utopia in an undated future that will be universally shared when the transitional moment is complete, "De Profundis", written after one indisputable disaster, puts fulfilment *alongside* the present. The letter recognizes a new sense of time, or rather a number of senses of time that co-exist, one with another. "We think in Eternity, but we move slowly through Time ..." (*Works*, 1025). This is the time of a life, no longer to be conceived as the smooth continuity of career, of family or achievement. Reminding Douglas of what he

personally had experienced, Wilde now stresses that the meaning of events lies in how they are felt.

“Whatever is realized is right” (*Works*, 1002) is the repeated motif of the new dispensation. Hegelian in origin, already present in “The English Renaissance”, the phrase now carries an emphatic punning overtone: what is realized is made real, though not as a realist might make it. This is realization in the realm of thought, of art.

“All this took place in the early part of November of the year before last”, writes Wilde.

A great river of life flows between me and a date so distant.
Hardly, if at all, can you see across so wide a waste. But to me it
seems to have occurred, I will not say yesterday, but today.
Suffering is one long moment (*Works*, 1009).

In what is by far the best treatment of “De Profundis”, Regenia Gagnier has stated: “the physical conditions of the prison determined the form and style of the work.”¹² In other words, Wilde’s romantic day-dreaming is designed to combat the imposed uniformity of prison time.

I want to make a larger claim by arguing that “De Profundis” is a defiance of the uniformity of history itself. As a result of prison suffering, says Wilde: “One approaches the whole of history from a different standpoint” (*Works*, 1024). Throughout the letter we have continual reference to Wilde’s relation to his own time: “I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me” (*Works*, 1017); “so typical a child of my age” (*Works*, 1020); “to one so modern as I am, *enfant de mon siècle*, merely to look at the world will be always lovely” (*Works*, 1057), though “how narrow and mean, and inadequate to its burdens is this century of ours: it can give to Success its palace of porphyry, but for Sorrow and Shame it does not keep even a wattled house in which they may dwell” (*Works*, 1058).

This may sound like an overall determinism, but in fact it depends upon the same principle of “realization” that gives reality to moments: “At every single moment of one’s life one is what one is going to be no less than what one has been” (*Works*, 1026). In other words, at every moment there are “realizations” to be achieved, decisions to be made. Religion certainly plays some part in this, but not the religion of priests and churches who come in for as strong a dismissal as anywhere else in Wilde’s work; nor religion in the sense of “metaphysics and morality” which Wilde specifically says are of no interest to him. It is religion rather

12. Gagnier, 180.

as a phase in the development of intellectual, or even political, culture. Since the coming of Christ “the history of each separate individual is, or can be made, the history of the world” (*Works*, 1030). Eschatology explodes teleology from within. The sinner should repent not in order to be saved, but “simply because otherwise he would be unable to realize what he had done” (*Works*, 1037). Wilde has discovered this to be true of himself:

While for the first year of my imprisonment I did nothing else, and can remember doing nothing else, but wring my hands in impotent despair, and say ‘What an ending, what an appalling ending!’ Now I try to say to myself, and sometimes when I am not torturing myself do really and sincerely say, “What a beginning, what a wonderful beginning!” It may really be so. It may become so (*Works*, 1038).

“Really” — a real realization. This is modernity, the material present. This is now, about to become the future. That is why Wilde can even claim, at the very end of “De Profundis”, that “The past, the present and the future are but one moment in the sight of God, in whose sight we should try to live. Time and space, succession and extension, are merely accidental conditions of Thought What lies before me is my past” (*Works*, 1059).

As a concept of time this is apocalyptic; as an idea of tragedy it is more Nietzschean than Aristotelian. This makes it seem astonishingly close to the “historical materialism” Walter Benjamin once opposed to the mere “historicism” we more normally practice. Benjamin argues that

A materialist cannot do without the notion of the present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing a history. Historicism gives the “eternal” image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past. The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called “Once upon a time” in historicism’s bordello. He remains in control of his powers, man enough to blast open the continuum of history.¹³

13. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London, 1973, 264. The similarities between Wilde and Benjamin have also been noted by Terry Eagleton in the preface to his play *Saint Oscar* (Derry, 1989). Wilde the Nietzschean, who probably never read Nietzsche, is an old theme, most recently rehearsed by Gary Schmidgall in *The Stranger Wilde*, London, 1994.

Once grasped, it seems a wonderfully liberating idea, this blasting open of history with a burst of the imagination. It does, however, have its limitations. The idea of living in God's time tends to takes over when human times are hard, when the more prosaic and plodding forms of social progress seem unavailing. It can even be form of despair.

And of course the idea is essentially messianic, which is to say, frequently male and often violent. Benjamin's metaphor for history and historians certainly has gender associations that are, to say the least, perturbing. Enjoying our own *fin-de-siècle* moment, we may well decide that we would prefer the continuum not to be blasted apart, at least not just yet, and foregoing the example of Wilde and his contemporaries settle for painstaking reports and realistic detail rather than divine visions.

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KIPLING'S DECADENT EMPIRE: *THE LIGHT THAT FAILED* AND THE *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE*

SUSAN DE SOLA RODSTEIN

The Light that Failed first appeared in serial form in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* of January 1891, which in the previous year had published Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In common with Conan Doyle's work, Kipling's novel features an alternation of London and foreign scenes centered around an imperial catastrophe — for Conan Doyle, the Indian Mutiny; for Kipling, the Gordon Relief Expedition at Khartoum. In common with Wilde's work, Kipling's novel also makes central the destruction of a painting with talismanic properties. Such shared elements among authors so different suggests a provisional *fin-de-siècle* vocabulary of motifs.

Since *The Light that Failed* may be unfamiliar to many, some recapitulation of its plot is called for.¹ The first chapters trace the childhood of the orphan Dick Heldar, who shares lodgings in an oppressive foster home with another orphan, Maisie. Both grow up to be artists. Dick becomes a special war artist-correspondent (the precursor of the modern photojournalist) and wins renown for his realistic pictures of fighting in the Sudan campaigns of 1884-85, fighting in which he himself sustains a head injury. Back in London, he leads the life of a celebrated bachelor artist until he again encounters Maisie, with whom he is obsessed, but who is utterly unable to reciprocate his sexual and romantic feelings. Their relationship culminates in a sort of competition to produce a painting of a "Melancolia", but as his nears completion, Dick starts to go blind as a result of his head injury. Once blind, he endures vividly described horrors of isolation and inactivity. The painting is destroyed by the vindictive prostitute-model, Bessie Broke, who posed for it. Contrary to the expectations of Dick's friend and partner Torpenhow, Maisie refuses to marry blind Dick out of pity. When fictitious fighting resumes in the

1. Rudyard Kipling, *The Light that Failed*, Penguin, 1992. All references to quotations from this edition are given in parenthesis in the text.

Sudan, Dick makes his way there to join the battle. He is shot by a “kindly bullet” in the head and falls down from atop his camel and dies in Torpenhow’s arms (208). In the serial form, which is nearly a third shorter, Maisie, in a startling reversal, admits the error of her ways and decides to marry the blind Dick, who is therefore content to ignore the “war-call” and the pull of foreign adventure.

As this simple summary suggests, the book, in both forms, juxtaposes English scenes with foreign ones in an almost chapter for chapter alternation. It oscillates between a domestic plot and an adventure plot, between the metropolis and the imperial outpost. The dual ending itself suggests difficulty reconciling the demands of the two locales and the two genres, encoding dilemmas about the direction of long fiction in England at the end of the century. The tension between the creation of a domestic novel of love and marriage versus one of exotic adventure and masculine fellowship anticipates something of the same dilemma that would immobilize E.M. Forster during the composition of *A Passage to India*, yet also looks back to *Jane Eyre*, where the blinding and laming of Rochester is the pre-condition for marriage and the elimination of the exotic and imperial sub-plots represented by Bertha and St John Rivers.

For many Victorian novelists, scenes of exoticism could only take place between chapters, off-stage. For the young Kipling, however, it was the English domestic novel of love and society that was the more alien code. Although his Anglo-Indian fiction had been praised for its precocity, this first effort to write an English love story was blasted for its callow immaturity. Even the sympathetic J.M. Barrie wrote that “Dick Heldar” (already seen as a stand-in for Kipling) thinks, mistakenly, that because he had “knocked about the world in shady company he has no more to learn” and that Kipling’s “chief defect is ignorance of life”.² In fact, however, the English love story and the foreign adventure are not simply opposed to one another — what links them are the characteristic *fin-de-siècle* inflections that define both plots.

Much is indeed made of Dick’s familiarity with the fleshpots and gambling dens of Port Said. Even the privations of his Sudan war experiences are described in intensely sensual, aestheticized terms. But his ultimate artistic accomplishment, he tells us, was a painting of a “Cuban-Negroid-Jewess” mistress (actually the Captain’s mistress) painted in just three colours on the side of the rotting hull of a long since broken up cargo boat in the middle of the South Sea (in close proximity to the murderously jealous Captain). Taking inspiration from Poe’s “Annabel

2. J.M. Barrie, “Mr Kipling’s Stories” (1891), in *Kipling: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green, London, 1971, 84-85.

Lee", Dick models both his angels and devils on this woman. Dick's decadent foreign adventure, with its characteristic insistence on the perishability of the art work itself, is not countered in England by any sort of pastoral domestic tradition.

In this novel, England is *fin-de-siècle* London and the "realist" painter Dick explicitly condemns urban artistic circles with their teas and dinners and talk of the "state of their souls": "I've heard more about Art and seen less of her in the last six months than in the whole of my life" (40). His entire London experience is saturated with an idea of urban decadence most powerfully emblematized in James Thomson's poem *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874), one of Kipling's favourite works and itself a seminal *fin-de-siècle* text.³ From the everpresent grey fog to "strange unreal city full of tin-tacks and gas plugs" (202) and "small things out of whack" presided over by Mr Beeton, the landlord, the London chapters depict a sort of purgatorial landscape of rooftops visible from Dick's window, devoid of any clear sense of wider moral or social structure. Even Dick's public are never materialized (with the notable exception of two artillerymen discussing, in highly literal terms, a reproduction of one of his works in a shop window). His fame is unimportant because the world is essentially indifferent: "there aren't twelve hundred people in the world who understand pictures" (87), and these are balanced in his mind by the twelve hundred unburied dead men he saw in the Sudan looking "just like a bed of horrible toadstools in all colours" (82). Dick notes the fact that he and Maisie are orphans in London, utterly cut off from any sort of controlling social network — a gauge of some distance from the orphans of Victorian fiction: "Now, who in all London would have sufficient interest or audacity to call us two to account for anything we chose to do?" (88).

It is, in fact, a source of concern to Dick (one much ridiculed by Max Beerbohm)⁴ that "bilious little Maisie" can live the life of an independent

3. Kipling apparently memorized the poem, which, he claimed, shook him to his "unformed core"; see Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself and Other Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Thomas Pinney, Cambridge, 1990, 22. Kipling draws on the poem in several works and used the title for a short story about an evening walk in Lahore. The city, of course, was an important *fin-de-siècle* topos. All quotations from Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* are taken from *Eminent British Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Paul Robert Lieder, New York, 1938, II, 553-68.

4. Max Beerbohm, "Kipling's Entire" (1903), in *Around Theatres*, New York, 1968, 245-49. Beerbohm's scathing review of the 1903 stage version of *The Light that Failed* is intensely interesting in its discomfort with the story's marked sexual reversals and ambiguities. The force of the review is to argue that based on Kipling's

woman artist in London without his protective ministrations. Maisie is not a typical heroine but one of the first of the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman figures. For Dick she is "so like a man" (87) as to be "not a woman" (82). She is an ambitious woman painter who lives with another woman painter. She is averse to romantic entanglements that would interfere with her work. She is repulsed by sexual contact. Kipling is sensitive in his portrayal of Maisie's anxiety about sexual indebtedness to Dick for his artistic advice, as well as to Maisie's humiliated awareness that much praise of her pictures has in the past been sexually motivated. Dick fantasizes about adorning Maisie with barbaric ornaments, but knows she would only "laugh at golden trappings" (58) and would never agree to even one gold ring. Dick's friend and colleague, the ultra-masculine war correspondent Torpenhow, does spirit Maisie back to London in the expectation that she will accept blinded Dick, but even he perceives his mission as an outmoded convention: "But it's absurd and impossible. I can't drag her back by the hair" (145).

Although criticism has usually associated Maisie with the ostentatious emasculation of Dick, she never offers domesticity as an allurement to Dick and performs no action that would interfere with his (or her) career. Although he promises to respect her work, she wants no part of it. He attempts to lure her to see the wider, exotic world with him ("how can you do anything till you've seen everything?": 79) and paints vivid word pictures of a tropical jungle paradise, and an ancient Indian mosque. The world is enormous; "very lovely" and "very horrible" and essentially indifferent. Through exposure to it one can develop one's art, yet Maisie is unmoved. To her these worlds sound merely "lazy" (78). Even Dick, depicted as blindly deluded in his fantasies of winning Maisie, is himself at moments aware that she is after all "stronger than I am" (112), and at the end he finds that she is "quite right" (163) by her own lights in her refusal of him.

Their relationship is defined ultimately by his vast superiority as an artist and eventuates not in love but in professional rivalry. In the process of mentoring Maisie, Dick articulates the sources of his art, or "The Law". One of the earliest instances in which Kipling uses and defines this famous term, "The Law" in this novel is defined as the law of artistic creation. It is a three-fold stricture: resolute application to craft, an utterly

(implicitly homoerotic) love of soldiers and masculinity, an uninformed reader could well speculate that Kipling was in fact the pseudonym of a woman author.

ego-less subservience to one's "daemon"⁵ that sees all good work as coming from outside oneself, and immersion in the wider world of experience. It forbids any calculated grasping at "success". Despite, or (it is suggested) because of Maisie's determination for "success" (74), her pictures lack "conviction" (138); her subjects are academic and conventional and in her hasty (and fruitless) pursuit of fame and fortune her mastery of the necessary skills (such as her line work) is haphazard. Her indifference to "real" experience in the (non-European) world is a critical part of her artistic inefficacy.

The professional competition which ultimately erupts between them is as much as anything a contest of artistic creeds. When Maisie suddenly breaks off their friendship in order to paint a Melancolia, Dick, stung by sexual rejection, determines to paint a better one. Maisie has taken her inspiration from the concluding section of the Thomson poem ("can't you see what a beautiful thing it would make?"), but there is heavy-handed irony in her seeming ignorance of the Dürer original of which the poem is an ecphrasis. For Dick, such an ambition is like trying to "rewrite Hamlet" (110) — a crazy notion for which Maisie "hasn't the power" (111).

Although it is not at all "in his usual line", Dick conceives a Melancolia "that transcends all wit" — a bitter woman who has "known all the sorrow of the world", no longer cares, and is laughing at it. The remarkable "murderous, viperine" (134) face laughing out of the canvas is a composite of Maisie and the streetwalker/domestic model Bessie Broke, suggesting an unconventional continuity between the asexual and sexual woman so rigorously separated in Victorian literature. Bessie is said to incarnate melancholia in her very status as one of the poor (she is, in fact, "broke"), but it is she who ultimately "bilks" Dick (135), whom she resents and whose penetrating artist's gaze she fears, by destroying his completed masterpiece (his "beauty", which she finds "beastly": 134). She uses both the domestic's sponge and the artist's palette knife equally with

5. The term "daemon" is not used in *The Light that Failed*, although its working definition is already in place. The term is articulated in Kipling's last work, his partial autobiography, *Something of Myself* (see note 3). The "Daemon" is a sort of spirit that uses Kipling as a channel of expression, and whom Kipling is careful not to drive away or offend. In his introduction to his edition of Kipling's autobiographical writings, Thomas Pinney, xxx, associates Kipling's use of the term with the ancient Socratic idea of the artist. The occult overtones of the notion are in accord with *fin-de-siècle* spiritualism, even while it tends to play down the agency of the "Artist".

“deadly skill” to reduce the painting to a “scarred, formless muddle of paint”.⁶ There follows a scene of macabre horror in which the now blind Dick offers Maisie the (unbeknownst to him) ruined picture as a gift, claiming it is “a beauty” and his masterpiece, provoking in her a terrible lunatic need to laugh (161). Thus Maisie, whose attraction to the subject in Thomson’s poem was ironized as personal (“Baffled and beaten back she works on still,/Weary and sick of soul she works the more,/ Sustained by her indomitable will …”: 1089-91) is now a living embodiment of Dick’s evacuated rendering.

The ancient, traditional associations of Melancolia with the frozen immobility of effort without issue and an unseeing, introspective gaze (in Thomson: “she gazes/ With full set eyes, but wandering in thick mazes/Of somber thought beholds no outward sight”: 1051-53) already apply to Maisie “with her big eyes that saw nothing” and her determined eschewal of the wider world (156).⁷ We are allowed to see Maisie’s stream of consciousness during a sleepless night at the French studio — her eye falls on a black shadow on the white gate that annoys her, and while she keeps wishing it away her thoughts devolve incessantly on her impossible relationship with Dick and her own impossible work and the bleak future ahead of her of studio work and rejected pictures unfolding year after year in “exactly the same way”: “The mill-wheel of thought swung round slowly, that no section of it might be slurred over, and the red-haired girl tossed and turned behind her” (*LF*, 152). The academic subject “Melancolia” is itself an index for a traditional art opposed to that of

6. The destruction of the art work is a *fin-de-siècle* motif that occurs several times in the novel, which grants art some importance but not permanence. Torpenhow puts a boot through a prettified picture of a soldier he considers to be a “sell-out” on Dick’s part; the “red-haired girl” (41) does a devastating head study of Dick in all his hopeless infatuation (for Dick this sketch is “the guillotine”: 65) that she mercifully lets fall into the stove before Maisie sees it; and Dick burns all his remaining sketches before going off to die. Kipling himself had an aversion to having his portrait done, “as likely to draw the Evil Eye” (*Something of Myself*, 53). After Maisie’s rejection of him, Dick is prepared to enter into a housekeeper/mistress relationship with Bessie until he learns about the damage. At his most misogynistic, he calls her a “little piece of dirt”, yet Bessie is still given the wherewithal to retort “I ain’t a piece of dirt” (*The Light that Failed*, 183). When he reflects how much damage “one little woman” (184) can do, it is unclear which woman he means. Before going off to die in the Sudan, Dick divides his material assets between these two women — the full extent of Dick’s participation in any sort of domestic economy.

7. For an extended study of the figure of Melancolia, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, London, 1964.

Dick/Kipling's journalistic action pictures that smell of "tobacco and blood". Maisie complains: "Can't you do anything except soldiers?" (65).

Yet, it is of a piece with *The Light That Failed*'s relentless destruction of its own saving terms, that it is Dick, who, although he could master melancolia as an artistic subject, unlike Maisie, cannot surmount its actual horrors of introspection and despair. Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night", which the characters quote, is remarkable for its refusal of any meaningful theological, social or moral structures. The final stanzas, personifying Melancolia, leave a simple choice between "new terrors" for the weak and "iron endurance" for the strong, and for all "confirmation of the old despair":

The sense that every struggle brings defeat
 Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;
 That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
 Because they have no secret to express;
 That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
 Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
 That all is vanity and nothingness.

(1103-09)

This failure of light is literalized in Kipling's novel as Dick's blindness. When sighted, Dick could at least immerse himself in activity and "action". Once blind, he finds inactivity and introspection, perceived as the worst of horrors, a living death far worse than death. His imagination, "the keener for the dark background it worked against, spared him no single detail that might send him raging up and down the studio, to stumble over the stove that seemed to be in four places at once". Paroxysms of "blind passion" ultimately give way to "settled despair" (140). The sighted Dick is perhaps emblematised by the attendant putto in the Dürer Melancolia, an infant lost in the activity of writing, oblivious to the torments of the Melancolia figure ("The grave and solid infant perched beside, / ... Intent upon its tablets, heavy-eyed ...": 1062-64), while blinded Dick, unable to transmute "sorrow" to "labour" can only find refuge in death, in Kipling's terms as well as Thomson's, something preferable to "ever-vain endurance" (Thomson, 1. 569).

Kipling prefaced *The Light That Failed* with a note that the novel version, ending in Dick's death rather than his marriage, is the story "as it was originally conceived by the Writer". Yet, the very arbitrariness of Kipling's alteration (and Kipling was not an author much concerned with palliating his audience), while providing something of a measure of just how viscerally wrenching the original conception was, also suggests that

the novel's real concern is not the reconciliation (failed or successful) of love plot to adventure plot, of the call of Maisie to the call of war or the sea, but lies somewhat elsewhere.

The centrality of the artistic contest and of Dick's experience of his blindness (which, unlike Rochester's in *Jane Eyre*, is given no hope of ever healing) is the novel's clue that its real subject is not just worldly experience, but the necessity of mastering experience by transforming it into portable, reproducible, aesthetic objects. However realistic, seemingly unschooled, suggestive of action, bloody, and "wild" Dick's work is said to be (and these descriptives seem to be an effort to distance it from the "aesthetic", much as Dick himself disdains the circles of London aesthetes), it is nevertheless an artistic transformation in which all of his exotic and manly experience, from a stint of privation on a Chinese pig boat to nearly losing his head in the battle which lost Gordon's, is not only fodder for art, but fodder for artistic development. From the drawing of the unburied dead in the Sudan going "in bulk back to their beginnings", he "began to understand that men and women were only material to work with, and that what they said or did was of no consequence" (82). His account of his art to Maisie is a telling of adventures:

the I-I-I's flashing though the records as telegraph-poles fly past the traveller ... The histories of strife and privation did not move her a hair's breadth. At the end of each canto he would conclude, "And THAT gave me some notion of handling colour," or light, or whatever it might be that he had set out to pursue and understand. He led her breathless across half the world ... (54).

This scattered voyage recalls Kipling's own favoured metaphor of a "three-decker" passenger vessel for the work of long fiction he could not produce.⁸ A perceptive early review by George Moore criticized Kipling for being a writer of "local colour" and dwelt upon the limitations of such writing ("Mr. Kipling has seen much more than he has felt") for an English public.⁹ In an early scene in *The Light That Failed* Dick disparages a London critic "who had been as far as Brighton beach" for calling his desert colours "unrealistic" (39). His memories of the

8. See *Something of Myself*, 132-33, on Kipling's longstanding desire to write a work of conventionally structured long fiction. He uses the metaphor of building a three-decker in the form of a ship. In his own estimation, *The Light That Failed* was "only a *conte* — not a built book" (132).

9. George Moore, "On Kipling and Loti" (1904), in *Kipling: the Critical Heritage*, 290.

"colours" to be found in the Sudan, despite the terrible fighting he experienced, including a grisly scene in which Torpenhow gauges out an eye of an Arab in hand to hand combat and then wipes his thumb on his trousers; his own near decapitation and the inglorious death of Gordon; and the utter failure of the English mission — all of these stimulate in Dick only a desire to return:

It makes me want to get out there again. What colour that was! Opal and umber and amber and claret and brick-red and sulphur — cockatoo-crest the middle of it all, and a decorative frieze of camels festooning in front of a pure pale turquoise sky ... (39).

Dick's seasoned eye is an appetitive eye, in which the world is a series of surfaces to be sensually enjoyed (and privations are themselves prominent among his sensually enjoyable experiences) and mastered. The horror of Dick's blindness is the horror of a life without fresh images and without activity to lose oneself in. This lack throws him back upon self-consciousness, a spectre both Dick and Kipling sedulously and superstitiously sought to avoid, as that which "spoils one's hand": "Least of all can a man do aught if he thinks about it" (82).¹⁰ According to Dick, apart from mastering the "bricks and mortar" of his trade, "everything else comes from outside ourselves. ... If we make light of our work by using it for our own ends, our work will make light of us, and as we're the weaker, we shall suffer you must sacrifice yourself, and live under orders, and never think for yourself ..." (74-81). Yet this confident disdain of introspective and self-conscious artistic practice is belied by the agony Dick experiences when he can no longer see; when he is forced to examine his "soul".

Among the most painful and haunting passages in *The Light That Failed* are those that describe the physical and psychic horrors of his blind inaction; the original terror of the final and permanent darkness; the feeling of endlessly dropping through the dark; of imagining the ceiling falling upon him; panic and immobility; the terror of once familiar objects; crawling cautiously around his chambers, feeling the walls with one hand extended before him; the unassimilable influx of stimuli in one outing to the park; the pressing weight of repetitive, obsessional thought (like two giant millstones grinding with no corn between them); handling and re-handling unopened grey letters from Maisie that he will never be able to read; reprieve in small repetitive acts of sorting shirts and counting lumps

10. Rudyard Kipling, Letter of 6 March 1890, in *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Thomas Pinney, II: 1890-99, Iowa City, 1990, 10.

intolerable physical weight of darkness itself. At one point he is urged to attempt some work with a small piece of clay only to ask in despair after a few minutes of fiddling if it “is like anything in the world?” (146).

All of this gruesome detail is only the start of a downward spiralling abyss of misery, beginning with his confused and half-blind flight from the doctor’s office when he is first diagnosed and ending with his pathetically excited sniffing of the smells of the army camp (camels, hay bales, cooking, smoky fires, canvas tents) when he returns to the Sudan, and his final desert crossing by camel, in which he imagines himself painting the scene back in London, calling up the orientalist visual vocabulary of sights he can no longer see or paint:

From the safe distance of London he was watching himself thus employed ... Yet whenever he put out his hand to the canvas that he might paint the tawny yellow desert under the glare of the sinking moon, the black shadow of the camel and the two bowed figures atop he was in the dark, and could see no canvas of any kind whatever (206).

For Kipling as well as for Dick Heldar, the Empire was first and foremost a visual structure rather than a clearly defined social or political or moral entity. In describing his search for the poetic formula: “What do they know of England who only England know”, Kipling describes his

notion of trying to tell the English something of the world outside England — not directly but by implication Bit by bit, my original notion grew into a vast, vague conspectus — Army and Navy Stores List if you like — of the whole sweep and meaning of things and effort and origins throughout the Empire. I visualised it, as I do most ideas, in the shape of a semi-circle of buildings and temples projecting into a sea — of dreams (*Something of Myself*, 54-55).

Yet Kipling’s sense of empire was so patently qualified finally as to permit no comprehensive vision of it — his work remains a “coastwise cargo boat of mixed notions” and not the three-decker “passenger vessel” of his supposed ambition. We search his works in vain for any of the faith and optimism and progressiveness that characterize imperialism’s typical ideology and which by 1890 were already becoming historical. Critics such as George Shepperson and Alan Sandison have noted Kipling’s failure (as opposed to say Buchan or Davison or Henley) ever to conceptualize a clear definition of Empire. They claim that his notions of history and human conditions were cyclical rather than progressive, and that the

("unfortunate") political trappings of his ideas have finally little to do with his essentially humanist questions about "self-realization" and "estrangement".¹¹ Kipling's imperialism, in the words of Sandison, is finally offensive "not because it is imperialism but because it isn't".¹² While these conclusions carry much conviction, they tend to slight the extent to which "imperialism" was for Kipling (as for Dick) an artistic mine to be worked.

In this sense Kipling's imperialism was not after all wholly distinct from *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism. In his early classic study, *The Eighteen Nineties*, Holbrook Jackson points out the coincidence of decadent art periods with "waves of imperial patriotism" and indeed defines decadence itself as "a demand for wider ranges, newer emotional and spiritual territories, fresh woods and pastures new for the soul":

The decadence was decadent only when it removed energy from the common life and set its eyes in the ends of the earth, whether those ends were pictures, blue and white china, or colonies.¹³

In his constant quest for new experiences, Dick Heldar is a decadent hero who becomes in the end a degenerate one.

Dick's work and its privations in the field are described with a sort of pleasurable relish. It is hardly the "unremitting work and sacrifice in the present reality such as the administrator participated in", which Sandison defines as the only salvation of Kipling's victim/heros of imperialism.¹⁴ That Dick needs to lose himself in work is clearly emphasized, but creating an artist (rather than, say, an administrator) emphasizes the sheer acquisitiveness of Kipling's exoticism. Moreover, Kipling wished to express a seductive adventurousness for which he lacked viable literary models (beyond stereotypical boyhood literature). The adventures of Dick and Torpenhow "from Philae to the waste wilderness of Herawi and Muella, would fill many books" (22), but they are not finally the subject of this book.

The Light That Failed does not finally simply defend the imperial exotic by its juxtaposition of the "austere love" of Dick and Torpenhow

11. Alan Sandison, "Kipling: the Artist and the Empire", in *Kipling's Mind and Art: Essays*, ed. Andrew Rutherford, Edinburgh and London, 1965, 153; George Shepperson, "The World of Rudyard Kipling", *ibid.*, 144.

12. Sandison, 166.

13. Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties*, London, 1939 (1913), 63-64.

14. Sandison, 154.

The Light That Failed does not finally simply defend the imperial exotic by its juxtaposition of the “austere love” of Dick and Torpenhow (58) to the more problematic love between Dick and Maisie. The English plot is only provisionally or at least problematically allied to the feminine. Moreover, the female characters themselves cannot be made to fit into any stable compartments, as is underscored by the painterly and visually unique manner in which they are put into the text. “The red-haired girl”, for instance, is never given a name and is referred to as such not only by the narrator but also by Dick and even Maisie. An impressionist artist, she is herself a vividly sketched character, but she is also simply a daub of colour and as such is linked to the red disc of the blood-stained Arab spear, to a broken-off piece of Dick’s prettified painting of a red-coat, to blood, to the blood-red desert sunsets and to the sun itself, a constant image in a work structured by a series of twilights and sunsets (in what could almost be a Jubilee joke).

Maisie is always associated with grey. She is grey-eyed, dressed in grey, and even the stationary on which she writes to Dick is grey. Her imagery is that of London’s everpresent fog, of failing light, and of the grey veils of gauze (itself a painterly image) that start draping one corner of Dick’s studio, eventually filling it completely as he goes blind. As Maisie is grey, London is grey. The real problem of connection is not between the call of love and the lure of adventure but that of the viability of imperial art in the metropolis. Similarly, for the young Kipling, even in the midst of his celebrity, London was strange and alien and above all, grey: “That period was all ... a dream, in which it seemed that I could push down walls, walk through ramparts and stride across rivers. Yet I was so ignorant, I never guessed when the great fogs fell that trains could take me to light and sunshine a few miles outside London” (*Something of Myself*, 52). In the correspondence of the young Kipling he describes his third breakdown (by his own reckoning) in the months before *The Light That Failed* and his fourth just following its completion. Letter after letter complains about the fogs and shows him as “wretched”, “heartsick” and just about “finished” by the “fiendish darkness” that can hit London before lunch.¹⁵ In March of 1890 he writes,

Recollect I’ve tasted power Sunshine, colour, light, incident, and fight I’ve had poured into my lap: and now the chastened amusements of this black place don’t bite Wait till you’ve been shot at and bossed a hundred and seventy men and walked “with

15. Rudyard Kipling, Letter of 11 November 1889, in *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Thomas Pinney, Vol. 1: 1872-89, London, 1990, 361.

"Death and morning on the silver horns" in the Himalayas if you wish to know how far the smoking-room, the club and the music hall, and the cheap ormolu amourettes taste good.¹⁶

While this self-description of an abortive trek in the Himalayas is rather over-dramatized, the sense of alienation and discontinuity is authentic. In *The Light That Failed*, his first sustained effort at long fiction, Kipling attempted cohesion through linkages that are visual rather than moral or social or even psychological. This is probably the reason the book was felt to be "thin" in its characterization and ill-considered in its structure. As Dick is temporarily blinded in youthful pistol practice with Maisie at the shore at Fort Keeling, so is he in the crucial battle in the Sudan, and in his delirium on this later occasion, he addresses Torpenhow as Maisie. When he first sees Maisie again, it is after a moment of blinding fog and he decides that she must have been "simmering at the back" (57) of his brain all these years; language that suggests his head wound. Most images are used several times in this novel, in both English and Sudanese contexts, giving the novel a terrific sense of compression and threatened explosion (which is how Dick evaluates his relationship with Maisie, "There'll be an explosion one of these days": 64). However, this visual grid also contributes to the peculiar vacuity of the novel's dark vision — its sense of the world as "very lovely and very horrible" and above all, indifferent. It is as though every increase in imperial reach is an addition of so much good and glory, yet there is an uncannily modern sense of a void hanging just on the other side; and it only takes Dick's physical blindness to make this void palpable. The semi-circle of buildings and temples of Kipling's vision of empire is like the "dome ribbed with millions of lights" atop which Dick is in his mind's eye perched just when he goes blind and is left alone in "thick night" (136).

Dick's moral and social blindness is also made noteworthy. There is not only a total lack, as in Thomson, of "redeeming" social or religious values, but the hero himself is a total solipsist, who goes to the Sudan in the first place for his "own hand" (20). The sum of what he takes away from the fall of Khartoum is his own code of self-reliance and earnings to be scattered in the dissipation of Port Said. When Torpenhow first "discovers" Dick sketching a "clump of shell-torn bodies", he says his

16. Rudyard Kipling, Letter of 6 March 1890, in *Letters*, II, 10.

business there is “nothing” (20); once hired, he is working “for cash” (44).¹⁷

Dick is described by his friends as needing a beating, needing some corrective to his arrogance, but the punishments meted out to him exceed any proportionate transgression. The Kipling code of order and discipline and obedience to the law is seemingly useless in the world of this novel. It is perhaps no surprise that the poet of “order” and “discipline” is such a powerful portrayer of states of mental breakdown and disintegration;¹⁸ nor that the apostle of duty and self-sacrifice could describe privation in terms of such sensual satisfaction. As I have already argued, Maisie is usually associated with the castrating effects of Dick’s blindness, yet the novel is quite specific about its origins. In the words of the doctor: “the battle wound, exposure to the strong light of the desert, and excessive application to fine work” (125) combine to blind him; his gifts are withdrawn by the very forces that molded them. This curiously cyclical and non-progressive pattern of gain and loss is echoed in many of the novel’s themes and in its highly repetitive structure.

If Kipling’s imperialist faith is so qualified as not to be faith, then his definition of empire’s value is one nearly as solipsistic as Dick Heldar’s. Empire is a field for personal development in which some good may be done, but that good cannot be expected to last. Its important offering is that of losing oneself in professional activity — whether that activity be painting, ship-building, soldiering, producing newspaper illustrations or getting out the *Indian Civil and Military Gazette* in sweltering temperatures (Kipling’s self-imposed “seven years’ labour” for empire, yet also his own seven years’ apprenticeship). Art, in a fashion-driven London, is no more lasting than any other work; Dick sees himself as only the enthusiasm of a season whose work is only a “tiny thing” in a world that is “so big” (77). One could almost — but not quite — call it “work for work’s sake”. Although Kipling seems opposed to many of the trends we associate with the *fin-de-siècle*, he is, in his constant framing of “experience” in aesthetic terms, in fact very much of it. The limitations of Dick’s vision — even when a flourishing artist — are registers not only of the limitations of Kipling’s vision of empire, but of empire as a visualizable, imaginable

17. J.M. Barrie was one of the first to comment on Dick’s blindness as a trope for Kipling’s own shortsightedness (see note 2). See also Mark Kinkead-Weekes’ “Vision in Kipling’s Novels” in *Kipling’s Mind and Art*, 197-234. Both critics tend to equate Kipling and Heldar without noting the limitations of his “hero” that Kipling is careful to emphasize.

18. Edmund Wilson, “The Kipling that Nobody Read”, in Rutherford, 17-69, argues that Kipling is a superlative evocator of breakdown and panic.

structure. From this novel an aesthetics of imperial representation specific to *fin-de-siècle* pessimism may be formulated which anticipates the expressions of skepticism and alienation that characterize much twentieth-century imperial fiction, as well as the compensatory stridency of the later, more highly politicized Kipling that would find such disfavour in critical quarters. The appropriate emblem for Kipling in 1890, then, is also the oblivious putto, scribbling away, but seated, nevertheless, next to an overwhelming figure of melancholy.

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BRUTALITY UNDER THE MASK OF ELEGANCE: FIN-DE-SIÈCLE VIENNA IN ARTHUR SCHNITZLER'S DRAMA

COBI BORDEWIJK

At the end of the nineteenth century, everywhere in Europe dramatists and directors turned away from the well-made play structure and the rigid wing-dominated stage with its artificial lighting, *mise en scène* and prescribed acting style. A new kind of drama emerged which wanted to show everyday reality through observation of human behaviour: drama as a slice of life, *une tranche de vie*. Through analysis of human behaviour, explanations could be found for its motivations and the situations created by it. One author was more explicit in his efforts than the other: Ibsen emphasized that children must suffer from the sins of their fathers and that suppression of women must lead to female self-liberation. Strindberg satirized the man-woman relationship in suffocating marital circumstances, Chekhov restricted himself to showing the behaviour of his contemporaries in a gently detached and occasionally critical understanding of it, leaving the final interpretation to his audiences. Schnitzler reported in his dialogues how the Viennese nobility and bourgeoisie passionately adopted externals, affected social manners and an aestheticism full of weariness of life and melancholy. Each one played his part in the game of life. The game was more real than life itself, than emotions, than ideals, than expectations. It was a commonly accepted mask to hide socially unacceptable erotic desires and a general sense of boredom.

Arthur Schnitzler was a friend and colleague of Sigmund Freud. They represented that intense spirit of experimentation and melancholic atmosphere we have labelled *fin-de-siècle*, which manifested itself nowhere as clearly as in Vienna. In science and all kinds of art, experiments were carried out and discoveries were made: in music by Schönberg and Alban Berg, in painting by Kokoschka, Schiele and Klimt, in literature by Von Hofmannsthal and in drama by Arthur Schnitzler.

Arthur Schnitzler was born in 1862 as the first son of the Vienna laryngologist Prof. Johann Schnitzler. He studied medicine and became assistant in his father's hospital in the sections psychiatry and syphilis. In

1888, when he was 26 years old, he travelled to London, Paris and Copenhagen where he witnessed the innovations in the theatre (liberal theatre, *théâtre libre*) and saw the plays of Shaw, Strindberg and Ibsen. In those days he published articles, poems and prose for various magazines. In 1891 he met the Berlin stage manager Herman Bahr and became a close friend. Bahr would help him to get the plays performed which he wrote between 1890 and 1914, a difficult task because they were often censored, or created scandals after the first performance. However, when Schnitzler died in 1931 he was almost forgotten. It is still difficult to find something on his work in general histories of drama and theatre. After his death the Munich *Völkische Beobachter* wrote on October 27th, 1931:

Um 1900 konnte ein Klassiker der “süsse Mädel”-Dramatik allenfalls imponieren, heute interessiert er nicht einmal mehr. Die durchweg auf erotische Effekte abgestimmte Werke Schnitzlers waren — abgesehen von dem bösen *Reigen* — nicht ohne einen gewissen Scharm Adolf Bartels zählt Schnitzler zur feineren jüdischen Dekadenz, und damit ist im Grunde alles gesagt. Da dem gesundenden [sic] deutschen Volke weder jüdisches noch dekadentes Schaffen liegt, wird Schnitzlers Name bald vergessen sein.¹

Before 1900 Schnitzler mainly wrote episodic sketches and one-act plays, which can be looked upon as exercises for his later full-length plays.² The theme of these early plays is the man-woman relationship in which emotions are hidden under an outward game of fidelity and infidelity, truth and lies, reality and illusion. This game was felt to be necessary if one wanted to survive the relationship and not be annihilated by it. The main character in Schnitzler's first play is Anatol, the prototype of a Viennese bourgeois, such as the intellectual, the doctor, or the lawyer. In seven sketches Anatol has all sorts of relationships with women, and in all cases the paradox is emphasized that love can only be real in the game.

1. Reinhard Urbach, *Arthur Schnitzler* (Friedrichs Dramatiker des Welttheaters, LVI), Velber bei Hannover, 1968, 15. “Around 1900 a classic of ‘innocent girl’ drama could perhaps still make an impression, but today it is no longer of interest. The works of Schnitzler, always aiming at erotic effects, were, with the exception of the evil *Reigen*, not without a certain charm Adolf Bartels reckons Schnitzler among the finer Jewish decadence, and in this way has stated basically everything. Since neither the Jewish nor the decadent creations agree with the healthy German people, Schnitzler’s name will soon be forgotten” (trans. by the author).

2. All texts of the plays analysed in this article can be found in Arthur Schnitzler, *Die dramatischen Werke*, 2 vols, Frankfurt am Main, 1962.

Schnitzler shows this in dialogues in which much remains unspoken, but is all the stronger suggested. Behind the frivolous and sprightly waltzes lurks heartlessness, behind joviality ruthless calculation, and after the game of love has been played, both man and woman find themselves lonely and unsatisfied.

Liebelei is a play in three acts with Christine as the main character, the prototype of the Viennese *süsse Mädel*. She is the type Schnitzler invented, a young unmarried girl of humble descent, either completely innocent or a corrupt and engrained villain at a very early age. She is referred to by this name either in a loving or in a mocking way. Schnitzler's dramatic world is peopled with the Anatols, *süsse Mädel* and married women he observed in Viennese society around 1900. In *Liebelei* theme and tension structure are determined by Christine's deep and pure feelings for the frivolous officer Fritz. When he is challenged to a duel by the husband of a baroness with whom he has had an affair, Fritz dies. Christine commits suicide. What was a game for him was real for her and she cannot even live with the memory of Fritz's attitude to love as a safe game that can be repeated with someone else. He behaves like most Viennese gentlemen, flirting with a married woman he cannot marry and with a girl below his rank he does not want to marry. After Christine has understood this game which is thoroughly false in her eyes, life has no meaning for her any more.

Schnitzler's most famous and most disputed play *Reigen* is a drama in ten dialogues, in which the game of love between men and women in various social circles is analyzed. It is sometimes referred to as the Viennese *Decamerone*. The play opens and closes with a Viennese prostitute, and in between all kinds of Viennese types are observed in their hunt for sex and erotic pleasure. Each time when the desired object has been conquered a new hunt is begun and so on and so forth. Although Schnitzler wrote the piece in 1896 and published it on his own account in 1900, it was not published officially nor performed until 1920. Immediately afterwards it was sued for immorality. Even in 1979 Schnitzler's heir refused the rights to perform the play to the National Theatre.³

What has been generally resented was that Schnitzler showed that the hunt for sex was totally independent of gender, rank and social position. No matter one's status as bourgeois, officer, prostitute or married woman, all were obsessed by one thing, the brief affair in which the process of conquering was more exciting than the conquest itself. After the conquest

3. J.P. Stern, "Anyone for Tennis, Anyone for Death? The Schnitzler/Stoppard 'Undiscovered Country'", *Encounter*, LIII/4 (October 1979), 26.

the partner is dismissed and replaced by a next one. This happens from prostitute to soldier, from soldier to servant girl, from servant girl to young gentleman, from young gentleman to married woman, from married woman to husband, from husband to *süsse Mädel*, from *süsse Mädel* to poet, from poet to actress, from actress to count and from count to the prostitute of the beginning of the play. The game is played by everyone according to the same rules in essential repetition and without ultimate satisfaction. All types want to enjoy the single moment which is safe and transitory, without consequences or responsibilities.

In the course of the twentieth century, the Viennese world evoked in Schnitzler's early dramatic experiments continued to fascinate both theatre directors and film makers. The German director Max Ophüls filmed both *Liebelei* in 1932 and *Reigen (La Ronde)* in 1950. He can be considered a soul-mate of Schnitzler's with regard to his choice of subjects and his dramatic style. In his films he was preoccupied with romantic love which is doomed to end, and he treated this subject seriously and at the same time with ironic distance, a sense of frivolity and decadent ornamentation. In his *mise en scène*, a kind of claustrophobia is created by placing obstacles between the characters and the camera. They seem as much imprisoned in space as they are locked up in their individual fates. Distance is shaped by reflecting their behaviour in mirrors and the glistening glass of chandeliers. Ophüls' cinematic style is characterized by the mobile camera scanning the claustrophobic sets: the camera moves in tracking and craning shots from one character to the other, groping for elements to suggest possible meanings by moving to and fro and up and down. It is the cinematic equivalent of Schnitzler's verbal art of suggestion.

Feminist film theories interpret Ophüls' films as revelations of the female situation at the beginning of this century. In the then patriarchal society women had no freedom to build an individual existence, but they were forced to choose between marriage, prostitution or temporary romantic love. Ophüls reveals that marriage and prostitution boil down to the same thing: women have to sell themselves as best they can. Only romantic love transcends this trade, but it is temporary and in the end nothing remains but a destructive narcissistic illusion.⁴

An example of Ophüls' cinematic adaptation of Schnitzler's theme of erotic and sultry tension created by the hidden desires of the characters, can be found in the third episode of *Reigen (La Ronde)*, the courting of the

4. Robin Wood, "On Ophüls", in *The Macmillan Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers*, ed. Christopher Lyon, London, 1984, II, 395.

servant girl by the young gentleman. When compared to another film version of this scene by the French director Roger Vadim in the Sixties, it becomes clear how well Ophüls caught the Schnitzler *fin-de-siècle* mood. Vadim is far too explicit in his cinematic style. He uses close-ups and flash-backs to emphatically visualize what Schnitzler and Ophüls far more effectively suggested. Vadim leaves nothing to the spectator's imagination and so destroys the unity of theme and style (**Figures 1 and 2**).

After dealing with another contemporary problem, the conflict between Jewish and Christian religious conviction in *Professor Bernhardi*, Schnitzler returned to the man woman relationship in his later play *Das weite Land*. Here we meet the now aging type of Anatol again as well as other Viennese types from his earlier plays. They have ceased to be types, however, because Schnitzler does not only show their behaviour but also makes them speak about their motivations for this behaviour and their attitude to the problems they are confronted with. The main character is the successful businessman Friedrich Hofreiter, who runs an electric bulb factory. He is no longer young and must accept that he is at the beginning of a new phase in his life. This is the first conflict: Hofreiter has only played the game during the first part of his life, is unsatisfied and cannot accept approaching old age. By way of protest he runs wild, courts a new girlfriend, whom he steals from his best friend, dismisses her after reaching his goal and thoroughly spoils the life of his wife Genia. A man in midlife crisis we would say nowadays.

The second conflict is the contrast between the life attitudes of Hofreiter and his wife Genia. This emerges when a famous pianist commits suicide because his love is rejected by Genia. Hofreiter first believes that he committed suicide because Genia dismissed him after a short affair and he is relieved to know that his wife also takes part in the social game of Viennese life. From a farewell letter, however, it becomes clear that the suicide was committed because Genia did not consent to have an affair in the first place. Furthermore, it becomes clear that she did not refuse him because of her marital status, or out of fidelity to Hofreiter, but for her own sake: out of self-respect.

This show of independence and true innocence estranges Genia from her husband who is used to being the centre of everyone's world and having each and everyone dance to his piping. Hypocritically, he now blames Genia for the death of the talented young musician and his anger increases when she tells him she would have acted the same if she had known her young lover would commit suicide because of her rejection. Hofreiter is shattered by her show of independence and leaves. Genia then decides to adapt herself to the Viennese life-style because she realizes that she is unable to cope with the self-inflicted isolation caused by her attitude

to life. She decides to be no longer innocent and sincere, but join in the Viennese society games. She now accepts the young officer Otto as a lover. When Hofreiter finds out, he challenges Otto to a duel. His motivation for this unexpected behaviour is complicated. It partly derives from conventional codes of honour, but his deepest drive is his anger about growing old and his jealousy of Otto's youth. He kills Otto in the duel and dismisses his latest girlfriend. He decides to belong to nobody any more. Right after this decision, in the final moments of the play, he embraces his young son, however, who comes home from the English boarding school where he spends most of his time.

Das weite Land has been rejected by many contemporary critics as dramatically unbalanced. What Schnitzler shows in this play, it seems to me, is the very unbalanced behaviour of human beings itself, the unpredictability and inscrutability, the vast enigma of the human soul. That soul is a vast, inhospitable, still undiscovered country full of precipices and without clear outlines. The human soul is full of contradictions, human behaviour is unpredictable. When Genia loses her grip on reality she decides to let herself slide down the slippery path of life; Hofreiter both kills and embraces youth. At the end of the play it remains unclear how the characters will continue. Will they slide down, manage to clear a way, or plunge into the abyss?

Schnitzler's general theme points forward to the theatre of the absurd of the fifties as indeed his contemporary Chekhov does. In the end there is a sense of nothingness and emptiness. But whereas Schnitzler's characters seem to accept the limitations of a self-contained world of erotic artifice and boredom from which only duel and death provide liberation, Chekhov's characters resist this. But they replace one illusion for a better life by another, and what characterizes them most is the desire to escape from the sense of meaninglessness. In his grim acceptance of nothingness Schnitzler has more affinity with Beckett's world, but without that author's sense of humour. They share an understanding of the futility of all hopes and aspirations, but not a smiling acceptance of the paradox to continue hoping, living, working in spite of the nihilism: the Beckettian "I must go on, I cannot go on, I go on". Schnitzler observes Viennese social life as an endless round of social gossip, love affairs and expensive holidays and sadly concludes that there is no meaning to all this, at least not one we can understand. His characters philosophize about this in the early decades of our century. The words of the gentlemanly hotel manager in the third act of *Das weite Land* discussing the human condition with Hofreiter sum up Schnitzler's vision of life at the time:

Why I betrayed her? You ask me? Haven't you ever thought what a strange uncharted country is human behaviour? So many contradictions find room in us — love and deceit ... loyalty and betrayal ... worshipping one woman, yet longing for another, or several others. We try to bring order into our lives as best we can; but that very order has something unnatural about it. The natural condition is chaos. Yes, Hofreiter, the soul ... is an undiscovered country as the poet once said ... though it could equally well have been the manager of a hotel.⁵

And so we have come to our present century. Brutality is no longer hidden under a smooth surface of elegant behaviour. A sense of nothingness and chaos prevails which was already indirectly exposed by dramatists such as Schnitzler around 1900, and which at the end of the twentieth century we seem to have gradually accepted and become accustomed to.

5. *Undiscovered Country (Das weite Land)* by Arthur Schnitzler, in an English version by Tom Stoppard, London, 1986, 111-12. The original German text reads:

Warum ich sie betrogen habe — ? ... Sie fragen mich? Sollt' es Ihnen noch nicht aufgefallen sein, was für komplizierte Subjekte wir Menschen im Grunde sind? So vieles hat zugleich Raum in uns — ! Liebe und Trug ... Treue und Treulosigkeit ... Anbetung für die eine und Verlangen nach einer andern oder nach mehreren. Wir versuchen wohl Ordnung in uns zu schaffen, so geht es gut, aber diese Ordnung ist doch nur etwas Künstliches ... Das Natürliche ... ist das Chaos. Ja — mein guter Hofreiter, die Seele ... ist ein weites Land, wie ein Dichter es einmal ausdrückte ... Es kann übrigens auch ein Hoteldirektor gewesen sein.



Figure 1: Scene from Max Ophüls' *La Ronde* (1950), Scene 3.



Figure 2: Scene from Roger Vadim's *La Ronde* (1964), Scene 3.

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LOUIS COUPERUS, THE DUTCH OSCAR WILDE, ON BEAUTIES AND BEASTS

JACQUELINE BEL

To look for the theme of Beauty and the Beast in Dutch literature is not an easy task. Certainly, many modern fairy-tales were written during the *fin-de-siècle*, for instance by Couperus,¹ to whom I will return extensively in what follows, and also by Frederik van Eeden who wrote the extremely popular *Little Johnny (De kleine Johannes, 1885)*.² The oeuvre of the Francophone Belgian author Maurice Maeterlinck, who was greatly admired in the Dutch *fin-de-siècle*,³ contains many fairy-tale elements. In addition, there were numerous women writers who turned out modern fairy tales by the dozen. However, these fairy tales do not make use of the theme of Beauty and the Beast.

Even if one interprets this theme more widely and searches for literature in which Beauty and Beast are united in a single character, as in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, or for instance in the *femme fatale*, the wolf in sheep's clothing, Dutch literature is no mine of wealth. Dutch writings of the *fin-de-siècle* are less decadent than we would perhaps like them to be.

Fortunately, however, a writer like Louis Couperus (1863-1923) does offer possibilities in this connection. His work is pervaded by beauties and beasts, as a rule united within a single character; moreover, it has the advantage of having been translated into English already during the *fin-de-*

1. For example the fairy-tales *Psyche* (1898) and *Fidessa* (1899).

2. See Marysa Demoor, "De Kleine Johannes in Engeland", *De nieuwe Taalgids*, 78 (1985), 137-142; "Dear Mr Gosse": brieven van Nederlandse auteurs aan een Victoriaanse criticus", *Handelingen XXXIX der Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en geschiedenis*, 1985, 37-46; "Frederik van Eedens correspondentie met Edmund William Gosse", *Mededelingen van het Frederik van Eeden-genootschap XXX* (1985), 20-44.

3. See Jacqueline Bel, *Nederlandse literatuur in het fin de siècle: Een receptie-historisch overzicht van het proza tussen 1885 en 1900*, Amsterdam, 1993, *passim*, on the reception of Maeterlinck in the Netherlands.

siècle, so that it was available in contemporary Britain. To discuss this writer together with his British contemporaries of the *fin-de-siècle* is therefore less strange than it might seem to be, as his work was operative within an English literary context.

As from 1888, Couperus almost yearly published a new novel which was subsequently given much attention in the Dutch press.⁴ He can be seen as one of the innovators of literary prose in the Netherlands. If before 1885 literature was predominantly informed by exemplary characters, an elevating moral and a happy end, after that year a change occurs: the protagonists become anti-heroes, who are no longer an example for the reader. The modern author of that period no longer provides his fiction with a clearly edifying message, and the story usually finishes on a gloomy note. This is also the case with Couperus, who was one of the first Naturalists in the Netherlands, although he remained detached from any literary school or group and cannot be regarded as a Naturalist *pur sang*. His work also shows a Romantic tendency. It is not surprising that the English novelist Louise de la Ramée, better known as Ouida, was one of his sources of inspiration. Shortly before his death Couperus wrote that he was reading the work of "Ouida and Zola, bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble". He claimed:

... when I was fifteen and read Ouida, I was already amused about those white-dove-souled heroines and she-devils, who were Duchesses, and in those novels walked in trains of genuine lace along miles of marble terraces on the Rivièra, enjoying a peach for lunch But in the midst of all those impossibilities and affectations, one very often distinguished the voice of the sensitive stylist⁵

Besides his talent as a novelist, Couperus owed a great deal of his immediate success in the Netherlands to the fact that he interspersed his work with the topics of the day; he hitched into a number of topical fads and facts, such as the so-called Woman Question in *Langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid* (1900, *The Law Inevitable*), the theme of World Peace in his two novels on Kingship, or the problems related to colonialism in his novel *The Hidden Force*, also of 1900.

Not only did he receive much attention in the Netherlands, but also abroad, which cannot be said for many Dutch authors. Couperus' work

4. See Bel, *passim*, on the reception of Couperus in the Netherlands.

5. Quoted in Frédéric Bastet, "Ouida en Louis Couperus", *Maatstaf*, XXX/4 (1982), 1.

appeared in ten countries: besides Holland and Britain also in the United States of America, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Czechoslovakia, Denmark and Sweden.⁶ As it was in particular Germany that during the *fin-de-siècle* showed a major interest in Dutch literature, the notice which Couperus attracted in the Anglo-Saxon world is remarkable, and I will return to his fact later on.

Fourteen of Couperus' novels appeared in England, as well as one fairy-tale, two travel accounts and one collection of short stories. These translations usually appeared soon after their Dutch originals. To give an impression: between 1890 and 1895 five of his novels were published in English translations, while more were to follow at greater intermissions. The British press continued to follow his work.⁷ Katherine Mansfield, reviewing for *The Athenaeum* in 1919, wrote about *Old People and the Things that Pass* that it "is one of those rare novels which, we feel, enlarge our experience of life".⁸ In 1920, *The Times* refers to Couperus as "the well-known Dutch novelist", and the 1922 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* devotes a generous entry to him, claiming that *The Books of the Small Souls* and *Old People and the Things that Pass* "raised him to the first rank of European novelists".⁹ And when Couperus died in 1923, the extent of his reputation was proved by the reference to him in the periodicals as "the celebrated Dutch novelist" (*Review of Reviews*).¹⁰

Although in his realistic prose début *Eline Vere* of 1888 certain signs already point to Couperus' interest in decadent themes — one of the minor characters being depicted as an aesthete who prefers to indulge in reveries while reading decadent Roman authors — these themes were to become more evident in his subsequent works. In 1890 he produced the novella *Noodlot* ("Fate"), which already a year later was translated by Clara Bell as *Footsteps of Fate*.¹¹ That this English version did not remain unnoticed

6. See the survey of translations in Henri van Booven, *Leven en werken van Louis Couperus*, Velsen, 1933, rpt. The Hague, 1981, 274-89.

7. See M. Galle, *Couperus in de kritiek*, Amsterdam, 1963; J.G. Kooij, "Couperus en Engeland", *Merlijn*, 11 (1964), 11-28; O. Wellens, "Couperus in de Engelse kritiek", *De nieuwe Taalgids*, 73 (1980), 191-97.

8. *The Athenaeum*, 931 (December 1919), 669 (quoted in Kooij, 21).

9. See Kooij, 20 and 22.

10. *Ibid.*, 23.

11. Louis Couperus, *Footsteps of Fate*, trans. Clara Bell, London, 1891 (all references to this edition are given in parenthesis in text).

may appear from a letter which Oscar Wilde addressed to the author, expressing his admiration of the book, and accompanied by a copy of his *Picture of Dorian Gray*.¹² This is not so surprising as the two books show a certain similarity: both novels demonstrate a partiality to an aesthetic view of life, and a relinquishing of traditional morality; in both a murder is committed, and in both a single character combines the traits of a beauty and a beast.

Although Couperus cannot be considered to have been a fanatic spouse, since it is generally assumed he was a homosexual, the consequence of Wilde's letter was that Couperus' wife translated *Dorian Gray* into Dutch; this translation appeared in 1893. It is possible to infer from these data, and by comparing the works of both authors, that Couperus read Wilde's oeuvre, and that there is a kinship between the two writers.¹³ Unfortunately, as far as I have been able to trace, the contact was never expanded. There is no evidence of further correspondence and it is unclear whether the two men ever met.¹⁴

Apart from this personal reaction by Oscar Wilde, *Footsteps of Fate* was also noticed by the press in a review of the book in *The Speaker* of 1891.¹⁵ Couperus is introduced as one of the revolutionary young Dutchmen rebelling against the literature of the previous era. The reviewer was reacting to the Preface to the novel by Edmund Gosse, who presents Couperus as an exponent of Dutch critical youth. *The Speaker* does not regard Couperus as a Realist, but notices in particular correspondences with the works of Edgar Allan Poe, and, not surprisingly, with Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* as well as Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. And this provides us with a transition to the theme of Beauty and the Beast.

Footsteps of Fate tells the story of the love between the English couple Frank and Eva, which is destroyed by a friend from Frank's youth,

12. Unfortunately the letter, first mentioned by Van Booven, 142, has not been preserved.

13. See Frédéric Bastet, *Louis Couperus: Een biografie*, Amsterdam, 1987, 155 and 403-404.

14. See Johan Polak, *Oscar Wilde in Nederland: Een flard verlaat fin de siècle*, Maastricht, 1988.

15. Bel, 87. Other reviews appeared in *The Athenaeum*, II (1891), 93; *The Academy*, XL (1891), 52; *The Saturday Review*, LXXI (1891), 780-81; see Wellens, 191-92.

Bertie.¹⁶ The latter is a thorough-paced parasite whom Frank picks up from the London gutters. Frank, who is rather fed up with his “wealthy bachelor life” (12) likes to have himself entertained by the androgynous Bertie. Bertie in his turn fully enjoys the luxury and wealth which Frank offers him in his White Rose Cottage. There is a lot of feasting and squandering of money. At Frank’s expense Bertie dresses himself as a dandy.

During a trip to Norway full of ominous references to the work of Ibsen, Frank falls in love with Eva, to the great displeasure of Bertie who is very jealous and tries to drive the lovers apart. Eva’s arrival on the scene forms a real threat to him, for if Frank marries her there will be no place left for him. Initially he succeeds in alienating Frank and Eva by sowing doubts in Eva’s mind so that she starts to distrust Frank, and by intercepting some vital letters. But when after a few years his dirty game comes to light, Frank, who is by nature more or less a restrained person, becomes so furious that he kills Bertie by beating him to death. As is to be expected, the murder does not solve anything. At the end of the novel, Frank and Eva commit suicide together, because Bertie’s shade will always hover between them. In this novel Fate continually plays a major role.

It will have become clear that in this book Bertie unites within himself the roles of Beauty and Beast. Initially he seems to be an innocent creature serving to promote conviviality in White Rose Cottage, but he soon reveals himself as a destructive force; it is his purpose to make the love between Eva and Frank miscarry.

The author depicts the duality of Bertie’s character in various ways: on the first pages he is introduced as the poor vagrant, but his aristocratic nature transpires as well:

And now, in the light, Frank could see the poverty of his appearance; his thin, shabby coat, shining with grease and bereft of buttons; his worn, fringed trousers; his dirty comforter, hiding a lack of underlinen; his ripped and slipshod shoes. In his confusion and awkwardness he still held his battered hat. This garb accorded ill with the aristocratic elegance of his figure It was like a masquerade of rank and culture in the rage of misery, beseeming it as ill as an unsuitable part in a play (5).

After a few days Bertie is transformed into a dainty gentleman. He feels at home among all the luxury and the narrator often compares him to a

16. On the narrative perspective in *Noodlot*, see Ton Anbeek, *De schrijver tussen de coulissen*, Amsterdam, 1978, 97-127.

cat: "He already felt more at home and began to bask, like a cat which has found a warm spot of sunshine" (10). Frank also sees him as a "catlike creature" (13). After a month Bertie feels altogether at home: "He dined with Frank every day at the club, to which he was introduced; criticised games and wines with the most blasé air in the world, and smoked Havanas at two shillings apiece as if they were mere straw" (16). He proceeds to change the interior of his room after his own taste: he bought "statuettes, palms, and oriental stuffs, and changed the unsociable aspect of the room into one of artistic comfort, which invited to indolence" (18). Here he organizes small orgies and invites women in whom he is not otherwise interested. Frank finds Bertie's activities extremely droll: "Now Bertie was very amusing, not only in his fun with women, the cruel sport of a panther" (19). But what interests him in particular is Bertie's play-acting: the vagabond acting the fine gentleman without any of his refined friends' noticing.

Frank does worry a little about finances. In recent months he had spent more money than in any previous season. But he "was lulled to sleep by Bertie as if by opium or morphia. Bertie had become indispensable to him" (25).

At a certain stage Bertie unannouncedly disappears for a few days into the English underworld, leaving Frank behind in great anxiety. After a few days he re-emerges in White Rose Cottage, looking like a drowned cat and with muddy trousers. (Incidentally, Wilde's Dorian Gray is in the habit of making similar escapades.) Bertie does not report on his doings, but begs Frank to forgive him. It appears from the novel that his selfish nature makes him keep these curious little pleasures to himself. Once in a while the beast in Bertie rises to the surface. He cannot just be a gentleman. Bertie also gives a witty turn to his disappearances. After his first escapade he makes a dead-pan statement to his friends: "At dinner, at the club, he related, with a melancholy face, that he had been out of town for a few days, attending a funeral. Frank had failed to receive a note through the carelessness of a servant" (22).

In the course of time Bertie goes under more and more frequently, remains absent for four or five days and returns "exhausted, pale and tired out. These were, perhaps, some secret excesses of dissipation — mysterious adventure-hunting in the sordid purlieus of the lowest neighbourhoods — of which Frank never heard nor understood the truth" (25).

At each of Bertie's disappearances Frank becomes gloomy. He cannot do without his friend. When his gloomy mood persists, Bertie on one occasion lectures him and advises him to make a trip to Norway. As Bertie is getting bored with London he is to accompany Frank. This journey to

Norway forms the beginning of a great drama. It is here that Eva enters upon the scene, the woman for whom Frank will conceive a great love. When Bertie understands that in the long run Eva will oust him from Frank's life, he successfully attempts, as has been remarked before, to part the lovers. For every character in the novel the outcome is disastrous.

Bertie clearly represents a "Beauty-and-Beast" type. He leads a double life, being at the same time a tramp and a dandy. Originating as it were in the gutter, he reveals himself as a fop and manages to behave like a gentleman. He is an actor and as such amuses Frank. He pretends to admire women without caring about them. In the mean time his need to be on the seamy side of life regularly emerges and he plunges down.

Bertie can also be regarded as a male version of the *femme fatale*: he seduces Frank with his entertainment and with his feline nature, making Frank dependent on him: Frank is intoxicated by the presence of Bertie, which affects him like an anodyne. Upon Eva too, Bertie exerts a fatal influence. He manages to fill her heart with doubts, "each word a drop of subtle venom, and the germ of strange doubts, which shot up like poisonous weeds" (104). Bertie succeeds in bewitching both Frank and Eva, as neither of them discusses Bertie with the other: Frank never reveals Bertie's past to Eva, although this annoys him and he would have liked to tell her aloud that Bertie was a parasite, a low fellow.

The manner in which Bertie is described in the novel is particularly interesting. He is continually compared to a cat. On the second page already he sits purring while enjoying the wealth and luxury, and afterwards his self-indulgent feline nature is repeatedly mentioned, as is his black-velvet glance. On the other hand, mention is made of his panther-like nature whenever his "evil" side emerges, as when he makes fools of the ladies and when he tries to talk Frank Westhove into refusing to see Eva to make up their quarrel: "With a movement like a caress, Bertie crept nearer, laid his head on the arm of Westhove's chair, and clasped his hands about his knees, looking, in the dusk and firelight, like a supple panther; and his eyes gleamed like a panther's, black and flame-coloured ..." (176). Perhaps the comparison with Beauty and the Beast is overcomplicated here because both aspects are described in terms of beasts: a cat and a panther; with a will, however, the cat can be seen as the "beautiful" and the panther as the evil element.

There is one more way in which Bertie, the beautiful man, features in the story as a kind of beast. When Frank discovers the truth and realizes that Bertie has caused the destruction of his relationship with Eva, he becomes so furious that he batters Bertie to death. The result is that the dead Bertie looks hideous: "the face a mask of blue and green and violet, stained with purplish black, which oozed from ears and nose and mouth,

trickling down, clammy and dark, drop by drop, on to the carpet. One eye was a shapeless mass, half pulp and jelly; the other stared out of the oval socket like a large, melancholy opal" (237). This gruesome mask will continue to loom up phantomlike between the lovers. After a two-year imprisonment Eva and Frank are reunited, but all joy has disappeared from their lives. The image of Bertie will continue to haunt them. Again, we can see the similarity with *Dorian Gray*, where the spectre of the murdered friend continues to emerge.

Bertie seems to be the optimal incarnation of the "Beauty-and-Beast" type; he only plays double roles; the seducer, the hedonist, the gentleman, the tramp, the friend, the schemer. Even in his death he still acts out a beastly part. However, one other "Beast" also features in the novel. Frank, the aristocrat, eventually reveals himself as a beast when he kills Bertie. Like a vampyre with a red haze before his eyes he goes on hitting Bertie until all movement has gone. So the novel actually features two characters with hidden bestial proclivities.

Implicitly the novel questions which of the two should be considered guilty.¹⁷ Who is the real beast? Frank is sentenced to a brief, two-year imprisonment, because the judge assumes he did not intend to kill Bertie. It was a kind of *crime passionel*: Bertie has torpedoed the happiness of Frank's life by actually bribing people with Frank's own money, which goes down the wrong way altogether. One would be inclined therefore to regard Bertie as the evil genius: he is the one that causes the misery. On the other hand it is evident that the novel does not treat the question of guilt in this manner: eventually it is not Bertie who is found guilty, but Frank who blames everything on himself: he has spoiled Bertie to such an extent that it stands to reason that the latter behaved the way he did. Being weak-natured, Bertie could not have acted otherwise.

In this novel the traditional question of guilt is treated in a special way. Initially Bertie seems to be the villain, the selfish profiteer who spoils the love between Frank and Eva; even when he is no longer there, this love will never be what it was before. Eventually it is Frank who carries the blame: for a year he has allowed Bertie to lead a luxurious life because he was bored, because he was surfeited with pleasure and needed new "kicks", the result being that Bertie was literally spoiled. Just before being battered to death, Bertie exclaims:

17. The question of guilt was a topical one in those days, in view of new developments in law as well as literature where the notions of good and bad were no longer simply taken for granted.

There was a time when I toiled and worked, and never thought and never cared. I ate all I earned and when I earned nothing I went hungry. And I was happy! It was you — you who fed me on dainties, and gave me wine to drink; and it was you who clothed me, so that I had not to work, but had nothing to do but to think, think, in my contemptible idleness all day long. And now I only wish I could crack my skull open and throw my brains in your face for having made me what I am, so finikin and full of ideas! Perhaps you will understand that at this moment I feel no gratitude for all you have done for me — that I hate you for it all, that I despise you ... (232-33).

In the closing scene, just before the lovers commit suicide, Eva relativizes this and says that she is glad that Frank killed him. "I hate him for coming between us, and haunting us now that you have killed him, and for the diabolical influence he still brings to bear on you and me" (262). A little earlier Frank has confessed his guilt. He says that

Bertie was not a scoundrel. He was nothing but a man, a very weak man. That is the truth I thought over everything I could remember of what he said to me in those last moments, in self-defence; and by degrees all his words came back to me, and I felt that he had been in the right.

Eva disagrees with him, but Frank retorts that "it is not Bertie's influence which divides us; it is my guilt" (260).

In this version of the theme of Beauty and Beast, in which both are united in one single character, the notions of good and evil, which are often related to our theme, are more or less relinquished. It is no longer clear who exactly is at fault, and in this respect too *Footsteps of Fate* is a modern novel.

What to say about the other beauties and beasts in Couperus' *oeuvre*? After *Noodlot* Couperus published *Extaze* in 1892, translated in the same year into English as *Ecstasy*, which may now appear to be a somewhat trendy title. This novella deals with the purely spiritual love between a man and a woman. The climax of the novella is a moment of spiritual union between the lovers, the ecstasy referred to in the title. However, this book also features a man who is simultaneously an angel and a beast. The man is in search of pure love, which he finds with a young widow. He considers her to be a Madonna, but this does not obviate the fact that he must from time to time remove himself to Brussels in order to indulge in wild dissipations. The brutish male animal with his red cheeks only wants

the ethereal woman, to the latter's distress. After all, she too is only made of flesh and blood, and despite her elevated, half-religious experiences she is really in search of a genuine male. He, however, only wishes to see her as a Madonna, and so at the end of the novel she is left with a bouquet of red roses. In this novel, with its strong tendency towards mysticism, and which many Dutch critics labelled as morbid, the male protagonist is a being uniting in himself two personalities. He strives for the exalted, but the baser values continue to allure him. The exalted can here be related to the beautiful — the base, the lustfulness, to the beastly.

In *The Hidden Force*, a colonial novel of 1900 set in the Dutch East Indies, several "beauties" and "beasts" occur. The book was translated in 1922 by Teixeira de Mattos, who from 1894 onwards had rendered most of Couperus' works into English. The novel describes the decline and fall of the Dutch resident Van Oudijck and his family. The resident is married to the beautiful and sensual Leonie, a veritable nymphomaniac, portrayed as a *femme fatale* who wields universal power. She bewitches her husband who rather spoils her, and has a liaison with her stepson whom she receives in her bedroom during the siesta. In addition she also starts an affair with the fiancé of her stepdaughter, and for the sake of variation she indulges in carousing orgies at Batavia. When she has no one to receive in her boudoir, she reads decadent writings by Catulle Mendès. The Dutch press was shocked by this character, which was considered to be rather too exotic for the tea-table.¹⁸ Some reviewers speak of her as a "she-vampyre".

However, she is not the only decadent figure in this novel: Leonie's lover, her daughter's half-caste fiancé, is depicted as a beauty and a beast. He really is a magnificent boy, but rather stupid — almost an exotic variant of the stereotypical dumb blonde — and during his bedroom activities Leonie finds him transforming into a wild animal. In addition, there are more half-beasts featuring in the book, a particular instance being the regent's brother, that is to say, the drunken Javanese prince who is beautiful in his debauched decay. Couperus turns this Javanese prince into a tragic decadent hero.

Couperus' greatest rendering of the theme of the Beauty and the Beast is *De berg van licht* ("The Mountain of Light") of 1905.¹⁹ This is a truly

18. See Bel, 191, and *Louis Couperus en L.J. Veen: Bloemlezing uit hun correspondentie*, ed. H.T.M. van Vliet, Utrecht, 1987, *passim*.

19. So far I have only treated novels which were translated into English shortly after their first appearance in the Netherlands, but unfortunately this cannot be said of this novel, which has been rendered into German and Czech; see Van Booven, 283. I think this is a missed opportunity and perhaps it can still be taken up. Generally

decadent novel about the youthful Roman emperor, Heliogabalus, who ruled for four years in the third century AD and had been elected emperor mainly because of his extraordinarily attractive appearance, and because it was thought that his father was Caracalla, who was particularly popular with the army.²⁰ Many decadent authors have paid attention to the child emperor Heliogabalus: Lorrain, Lombard, Huysmans, George, Wilde (who devotes a few sentences to him in *Dorian Gray*), Gautier, Flaubert, D'Annunzio, and Gourmont, amongst others.²¹ According to several historians from antiquity, the aesthete and hedonist Heliogabalus was a sadist, a masochist, a practitioner of transvestism, and someone who was continually in search of new pleasures, strange as they perhaps might appear to us. Moreover, in his view everything must be subject to the service of the solar deity, whose archpriest and reincarnation he is.

Couperus' novel relates the life of this fourteen-year-old emperor, the priest of the sun who desired to be man and woman in one, because that would make possible the mystical union with the androgynous deity. In the novel, the Rome of Antiquity is presented as one huge brothel. Heliogabalus desires a beautiful death, but he ends up in a slaves' latrine. The emperor is portrayed as the epitome of beauty, but at the same time he enjoys the sacrifice of children — he is simultaneously a Beauty and a Beast.

It would lead me too far to discuss this novel at greater length, but the fact that it was never translated into English seems to be significant. Although there may be various reasons for it, such as the decline of interest in matters decadent after the fall of Oscar Wilde in 1895 and a re-emergence of the Realist novel in the Edwardian period, it is difficult to make firm pronouncements in these matters, which are clearly in need of further research. However, it appears that the English interest in Couperus did not primarily focus on the decadent aspect of his oeuvre. That during the *fin-de-siècle* this oeuvre was concurrently translated in Anglo-Saxon countries may be due to incidental personal contacts which were furthered

speaking, even in the case of those novels of which early English versions do exist, this author's exquisite style deserves better treatment than it has received in the past, and now that Dutch classics as well as modern authors are being increasingly published by well-established English firms, new translations of Couperus's major novels are certainly called for.

20. I use here the definition of decadence as in Jaap Goedegebuure, *Decadentie en literatuur*, Amsterdam, 1987, 12-35.

21. *Ibid.*, 72-105.

by these translations.²² In addition, Couperus was counted in England among the moderns, and his work did by no means resemble the famous “three-deckers” so hated by modern authors — those books in three volumes with an old-fashioned morality which were only disseminated by the circulating libraries because they were too expensive for private acquisition.²³ The translations of his works therefore appeared at a convenient moment in time, increasing as they did the supply of modern prose which was available at a reasonable price.

All the same, in the course of time the appreciation of Couperus in England appears to have been particularly directed towards books set in The Hague, rather than towards books that feature beauties and beasts, that is to say, books with a decadent or licentious aspect. In this context it is perhaps of interest to note that *Langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid* (1900, in 1921 to be translated under the title *The Law Inevitable*) brought Couperus in touch with English censorship: it overstepped the mark of the criteria of the Obscenity Law, and the publishers did not want to take any risks. At the end of this otherwise very virtuous novel, the heroine, after a mainly platonic intermezzo with an artist, goes to bed with her former husband. The translator, Teixeira de Mattos, wrote to Couperus in 1921: “I have taken the heroine out of bed, to please Butterworth ... and we must hope that this concession will add many thousands to the circulation of your book.”²⁴ The book did well and it shortly saw a second impression.

After his death in 1923, the British press wrote very favourably about Couperus. He was considered to be an esteemed writer, but the main emphasis was laid upon the few novels set in The Hague — novels which are also appreciated most in the Netherlands — rather than upon the decadent elements in his *oeuvre*. I would agree that the aspect of beauty-and-beast, of most interest to us in the context of this conference, is one of Couperus’ most fascinating traits. However, in the general reception of Couperus in England the other texts win out.

22. See Marysa Demoor’s articles (note 2).

23. Actually, in the Netherlands his novels were quite expensive (see Van Vliet, 11).

24. Quoted in Kooij, 18.

FREDERIK VAN EEDEN ON STEVENSON AND PATER

TRANSLATED BY WIM TIGGES

In 1894, the Dutch novelist, poet, playwright, essayist and psychotherapist Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932) produced the Second Series of his *Studies*, collected papers on literary, political, philosophical and medical subjects. In a paper on “New English Prose”, originally published in September 1891, he made the following remarks on R.L. Stevenson and Walter Pater, which may be of interest to students of the international reception of these authors. They are here presented in what is presumably their first English translation. The original text can be found in Frederik van Eeden, *Studies: Tweede reeks*, Amsterdam, 1894, 152-54, 158-62.

* * *

Robert Louis Stevenson is one of the best writers in a genre which is nowadays not held in very high esteem. Nor will he who agrees with me in the above call him a great author. He is the writer for pastime. He is a novelist, and more of a novelist than of an artist. He executes novellas, and claims, with much justice, to do it well. Such a thing can be done with devotion, with intense pleasure, with satisfaction. Stevenson is a very deserving author. Only, he is not a great artist.

Whenever one is in the dumps, whenever a very natural and excusable weakness has made us sick and tired of all that heavy and serious reading and thinking, of all those issueless issues, all that fatiguing palaver — and also, whenever one finds our daily world, what with getting dressed and undressed, doing stuffy business and meeting the same people, with newspapers and twaddle about elections, with domestics and umbrellas and taxes — quite insufferably boring, then one should take up such a novel by Stevenson.

Delightful scuffles, escapes, shipwrecks, wanderings through most pleasant uninhabited or inhabited countries, Jacobites, conspirators, pirates and freebooters, immense treasures on a lonely island, knights, castles, suits of armour, black arrows whirring left and right past your ears,

swordblows through helmet and head — and then the scenes so enjoyable, the medieval forest, full of wild boars and deer and green robbers with bows and arrows, — barren Scotland with its high moors, wandering about there in sun and rain, living only on oats, — and the fresh salt sea, sailed by old-fashioned corsairs, full of undiscovered shores, full of never-trodden islands, full of rocks on which the ancient tubs gratingly smash their thick beams, and on which one starves for months on end and waves one's shirt — to be saved at last, and to be well and comfortably at home near a snug hearth-fire. All of this is to be found in Stevenson's books.

And even so, the literary conscience is not too excessively perturbed. The freebooters are veritable freebooters, "nullement opéra-comique" as Laforgue would say, the characters speak and act naturally, occasionally one finds in their conversations even an extraordinary dry pith, the scenes are pleasant, lively, always entertaining — and above all: the language is mostly charming, melodious English with a very original cool timbre. If I may call Kipling's language facetious, then the language of Stevenson is witty. It never achieves moving eloquence. It is always restrained, every sentence is separately considered. The style is shaped with loving attention and one feels a pleasant man at the back of it, with a broad view of matters.

We all love Walter Scott, no matter how much novelistic hotch-potch he wrote, — with equal justice we may love Stevenson. He gives us equal pleasure, and this at a time when due to the refinement of our taste, Scott's novels are becoming unpalatable. In the artistic world he fulfils a useful function, even if it is not the most important one. He is diverting, holding one pleasantly engaged, and at the same time literarily well-mannered. Nor does he pretend to be more than what he is, which is a token of *savoir-vivre*. And that is precisely why he is not only much more, but even of a very different and higher breed than the whole numerous set of novelists — the Rider Haggards, the Walter Besants, the Wards, the Lyalls — and whatever else that whole lot of book-factory hands may be called.

* * *

Usually, philosophy does not do art a lot of good. Morris' utopia is art for which one would offer no more than a cent, and Swinburne I would also rather read in verse than in prose. But the writer I have saved to the last, Walter Pater, is altogether a philosopher-artist by nature. He is not the one thing more than he is the other. They are completely and intensely interwoven, his art of writing and his ideas. He is a new and very uncommon man.

I had never heard of him nor read his name anywhere, until I lighted upon his book, which is nearly ten years old. But I immediately held him in great esteem. I consider him to be one of the most prominent and noble figures of our time.

Nevertheless, speaking in general, I wish at once to dissuade anyone from buying one of his books. It would cause me trouble. For his books are expensive and as dry as dust. Mallock occasionally loves a joke; Walter Pater simply does not know what it is, a joke. He is as airy, as fond of laughter as a church-pillar. But neither have I ever read anything comical by Shelley.

Moreover, one will find the reading very tough, impossible to get through. However, this is a matter of haste and of taste. A small woodworm will get through the thickest beam, because it likes wood and is not in a hurry. Thus I got through Pater's prose, and I found it more and more to my taste. I feel like reading the same book again at once. This reading-matter satisfies so many of my cravings simultaneously, that afterwards my soul feels grateful and comfortable as does the body after a meal, feeling instinctively that what has been enjoyed was just what it craved.

Usually, we begin to admire a writer very much when we think that he has intentions which correspond to our own secret intentions, even if that is only a fancy. This could be the case with me.

What I admire in Pater and in his book is the astonishing love and care for his work of writing. The patient and attentive zeal with which the whole has been composed and with which every detail, every sentence, every word has been cultivated and arranged in order to achieve the most perfect and the clearest expression of what was intended. I admire the book as I would admire a church of which I knew that every stone has been placed in position, every ornament finished off by the master-builder himself. How beneficial the aspect of such quiet, deliberate effort, with such a strictly pure intention.

But I also admire the building itself, the stately, sober construction — and the material, the sonorous, ever equable, solemn rhythm of a prose which is sometimes too marvellously interwoven.

“And its rare blending of grace with an intellectual hardness or astringency, was the secret of a singular expressiveness in it.”

It resembles the Gothic style, forming an abundance of ever similar, endlessly complicated, stiff but yet graceful ornament, into great and severe masses, striving firmly upwards.

Marius the Epicurean is a historical novel. But this evokes great laughter if one thinks of Ebers or Ouida or Dahn or Eckstein. After reading this extremely lofty, distinguished, old and wise book, I cannot

even think with satisfaction of the variegated and bloody spectacle of Flaubert's *Salammbô* or of the operatic *Akedysseril*. It is not the case that I now esteem these works less, but they have acquired something puerile, something gaudily barbaric.

Very little happens in the book. It is the education of Marius, his friendship with Flavian, Flavian's death, Marius' arrival in Rome at the court of Marcus Aurelius, his friendship with Cornelius, who is a young Roman knight and a Christian, his acquaintance with a Christian family, his imprisonment when he is mistaken for a Christian, his illness due to exhaustion during a march as a prisoner, his solitary death in the cottage of poor country folk.

But the novel is the development of Marius' inner life and mind. It consists entirely of ideas, ideas which are broad, deep and subtle. At times it is hopelessly abstract, arid, drab, drab. But time and again, with deliberate art, the drabness becomes lighter and lighter, and visual images of a calm, bright beauty will shine like gold-illumined clouds, with autumnal sun or with the golden splendour of old-Italian landscapes. An evening in Pisa when the ship of Isis is launched on to the sea, a triumphal procession of Aurelius, an afternoon at Tibur, a banquet at a poet's, — a domestic scene at the imperial palace. Every scene quiet, delicate, softly glittering like gold. And with a clear intention to provide solidity to and set off the silent process of impalpable ideas by means of a halting-place of beautiful sensual impression.

In addition to that, there is much learning, much Greek and Latin, not for display but because Pater apparently had it ready to hand and thought he could use it, just as a bird that lives in the vicinity of human beings may use silk and wool in building its nest. A translation of the history of Cupid and Psyche, after Apuleius, a marvel of exquisite English prose, and a dialogue between Lucian and a young scholar (...) stand forth in it like well-positioned ornaments.

I do not know anyone of significance who in his beauty and in his manner of achieving it differs so enormously and may expect so little esteem from the modern French and Dutch artists as does Walter Pater. But I consider his beauty to be a great beauty, his intentions to be perfectly clear, his labour marvellous.

I cannot think of any a priori reason for placing this lover of the beauty of thought, evenly supported by a fleeting sense impression, much lower than the artists of intense emotions, of violent colours and sounds, of brusque and fierce fancies.

Perhaps his time will be a distant future, when the life of thought will be complex and refined, the passion for strong sensual excitement defunct,

the inner life tender and tranquil — and when no one is any longer in a hurry, either when reading or when writing.

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